

# Common Questions and Answers for the Free & Reduced-price Meal Application

## ***Who qualifies for the free and reduced-price meal program?***

- All children in households receiving SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), or FDPIR (Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations) benefits are eligible for free meals regardless of income.
- Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals
- Children participating in their school's Head Start Program are eligible for free meals
- Children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free meals
- Households may qualify for Free or Reduced-price meals if the household's total gross income is within the limits on the Income Eligibility Guidelines chart, shown on the application instructions.
- Households qualifying for "Zero" SNAP Benefits must complete a meal application with income.

## ***How do I apply for the free and reduced-price meal program?***

Households can apply online or by filling out a paper application. To apply online, please visit: [mesamealapplications.mpsaz.org/](http://mesamealapplications.mpsaz.org/)

A paper application may be obtained at any cafeteria, school front office, or the Food and Nutrition office at: 143 S. Alma School Rd., Mesa, 85210

## ***How do I know if my children qualify as Homeless, Migrant, or Runaway?***

Do the members of your household lack a permanent address? Are you staying together in a shelter, hotel, or other temporary housing arrangement? Does your family relocate on a seasonal basis? Are any children living with you who have chosen to leave their prior family or household? If you believe children in your household meet these descriptions and haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call (480) 472-0291 to confirm Homeless or Runaway. To confirm Migrant status, call (480) 308-7564.

## ***Do I need to fill out a meal application for a Foster child?***

If you provide Food & Nutrition with a copy of "The Notice to Provider Educational and Medical" letter, you do not need to fill out a meal application.

## ***Do I need to fill out an application for each child?***

No, one application is required for all students in your household. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information.

## ***Should I fill out an application if I received a letter this school year saying my children are approved for free meals?***

No, if you received notification that your child(ren) has been directly certified to receive free meals for the school year, you DO NOT need to apply for benefits. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, please contact (480) 472-0918.

## ***What measures can I take to expedite the application process?***

To expedite your meal application, please utilize our online application process at: [mesamealapplications.mpsaz.org/](http://mesamealapplications.mpsaz.org/) The application will be processed faster and you will also receive a confirmation number to follow up on the application status. Paper applications may take up to 10 business days to process.

## ***My child's application was approved last year. Do I need to fill out another one?***

Households are not required to fill out a new application, but it is recommended households fill out a new application to be eligible for Pandemic-EBT, school funding, and various other school related discounts. If you have received notification that your child is eligible for the free and reduced-price meal program, you do not need to fill out a new application.

***Who should I include as members of my household?***

You must include all people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends) who share income and expenses. You must include yourself and all children living with you. If you live with other people who are economically independent (for example, people who you do not support, who do not share income with you or your children and who pay a pro-rated share of expenses), do not include them.

***May I apply if someone in my household is not a U.S. citizen?***

Yes, you, your children, or other household members do not have to be U.S. citizens to apply for free or reduced-price meals. Our organization does not release information for immigration-related purposes in the usual course of operating the School Nutrition Programs.

***What if my income is not always the same?***

List the amount that you normally receive. For example, if you normally make \$1000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only made \$900, put down that you made \$1000 per month. If you normally get overtime, include it, but do not include it if you only work overtime sometimes. If you have lost a job or had your hours or wages reduced, use your current income.

***If I don't qualify now, may I apply later?***

Yes, a meal application can be submitted any time during the school year. For example, children with a parent or guardian who becomes unemployed may become eligible for free or reduced-price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.

***Do I need to provide money while waiting for the application to be processed?***

For the entire 2021-2022 school year, all students may receive one free breakfast and one free lunch at no cost every school day.

***Can I get a copy of my "Eligibility Notification Letter"?***

Yes, a letter is automatically sent home after the application has been processed, please be sure to save this letter for future reference (summer school, swim lessons, tests, band, orchestra etc.).

To replace a lost letter, use one of the following methods listed below. Please provide the student's first name and last name, student's 6 digit ID# (if known), grade, and how you would like to receive the copy of the letter.

-Website: [mpsaz.org/food/meal-applications](https://mpsaz.org/food/meal-applications)

-Email: [ymwhiting@mpsaz.org](mailto:ymwhiting@mpsaz.org) or [fcduran@mpsaz.org](mailto:fcduran@mpsaz.org)

-Phone: (480) 472-0918 or (480) 472-0929

***My family needs more help. Are there other programs we might apply for?***

To find out how to apply for SNAP or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call 1-800-352-8401.

---

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act requires the information requested in order to verify your children's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. If you do not provide the information or provide incomplete information, your children may no longer receive free or reduced-price meals.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.