

Free and Reduced Meal Application FAQs

Application Completion Tips

What measures can I take to expedite my applications approval?

- **APPLY ONLINE!** (Fastest way to get approval)
- OR
- Fill out a paper application and:
 - Use **BLACK** ink (NO PENCIL OR RED INK PLEASE!)
 - **Print Clearly**
 - Use your student's name(s) as it appears in the school records
 - List all Other Household Members including moms, dads, infants, college students, grandparents, etc.
 - Fill in the last 4 digits of the Social Security Number for the signer or put an "X" in the box indicating that you do not have a Social Security Number
 - **SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED**
 - Foster Child/Homeless/Group Home applications should be completed on a separate form and must be registered with the Burbank Unified School District Student Services Department.

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

NO. Complete ONE application for all students who attend Burbank schools in your household. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information. Return the completed application to the Food Services Office, the School Office or the School Cafeteria Manager.

Who can receive free meals?

There are several ways that your children may be eligible for meals free of charge: Your child can get free meals if your household income is within the free limits on the Federal Income Guidelines.

Another way is through "categorically eligibility". If one member of your household is currently receiving assistance (benefits) from one of the following Programs: CalFresh, or CalWORKS, **all** children in the household are eligible for free meals. (Remember, a household is defined as "...a group of related or non-related individuals, who are not residents of an institution or boarding house, but who are living as one economic unit." You are issued a "case number" when receiving benefits. Please use that number on your application to speed the approval process.

Foster children are categorically eligible for free meal benefits but must be registered with the Burbank Unified School District Student Services Department and fill out an application indicating that status. Foster children may be included in the household application as part of the household size however inclusion of a foster child on an application with other household members does not automatically entitle the household to benefits.

Other categorically eligible children are those who meet the definition of "institutional (group home) or homeless. Group Home and Homeless students must be registered with the Burbank Unified School District Student Services Department and fill out an application indicating that status.

What is Direct Certification?

Under direct certification, school districts use information from the State Social Service Department to certify children to receive free meals. To qualify, the children's families must receive assistance from CalFresh, CalWORKS, or some MediCal Programs.

The state of California Social Service Department supplies the Food Service Department with a monthly list of students that have been "Directly Certified" for free meal benefits. If your family qualifies for "Direct Certification" you will receive a letter stating that you qualify and do not need to apply for benefits. This list is updated monthly. Qualification for Direct Certification changes yearly.

If one student is Directly Certified, in a household, are the remaining students also Directly Certified?

Yes. If you received a letter that did not show all students in your household please call the Food Services Department at 818-729-4539.

How long does it take to process an application?

At the beginning of the school year through the winter break it can take up to 10 working days to process your application. At other times during the year your application may be processed in as little as two or three days. In either case a letter will be sent to the home address supplied on the application or email if provided. If you do not receive a letter or email from the Food Services Department within two weeks of applying please call 818-729-4539.

What are the Income Eligibility Guidelines for the current School Year? Have the eligibility guidelines changed from last school year?

Yes the eligibility guidelines have changed from last year and you do need to fill out a new application if you feel you still qualify for the meal benefits.

Schools and institutions will use the IEGs, published by the Food and Nutrition Department of the USDA, in making eligibility determinations for free and reduced price meals for the current School Year. The Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEGs) are used in determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals or free milk. These guidelines are used by schools, institutions, and facilities participating in the National School Lunch Program. They are effective from July 1 through June 30 every year.

I got a letter saying my children are approved for free meals for this school year. Should I fill out an application?

All applications **MUST** be renewed every new school year. Please carefully read the letter you received and follow the instructions. Call the Food Service Department if you have questions. If you received a letter for the *current* school year, then *no*, you do not have to fill out a new application. (Just make sure that all of your children are listed on the letter as being eligible to receive free meals.)

Who can receive Reduced Price meals?

Your child can receive low cost meals if your household income is within the reduced price limits on the Eligibility Guidelines. Please fill out an application.

I receive WIC (Women, Infants and Children) benefits. Can my child get free meals?

Children in households participating in WIC **may** be eligible for reduced price or free meals. Please fill out an application to see if you qualify based on family income.

Will the information I give be checked?

Yes, we may ask you to send written proof of the information you give.

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

You may apply at any time during the school year. If you submit a second application which lowers your income you will be asked to provide proof of lowered income.

What if I disagree with the school's decision about my application?

You should talk to a school official. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to Food Services Department or School District Business Services Department.

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

You or your child(ren) do not have to be a U.S. citizen to qualify your child to receive reduced price or free meals.

Who should I include as members of my household?

Include yourself, all children who live with you, (who are not attending Burbank schools), and all other people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, babies, college students or friends).

What if my income is not always the same?

Please contact the Food Service Department for further instructions. Normally you will list the amount that you normally receive BEFORE deductions. For example, if you normally receive \$1,000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only got \$900, put down that you get \$1,000 per month. If you are normally paid for overtime, include it.

Are applications available in other languages?

Applications are available in English, Spanish and Armenian. Applications may also be available in other languages.

Why is it necessary to use the same name as it appears in the attendance records?

Since the School District uses the birth date and name information from the Birth Certificate for all school records, the only way the application can be validated is by using the same information. Clearly, nicknames and family abbreviations will slow down the application process.

Why do you list All Other Household Members?

The consideration for approval of an application is based income and the number of household members. Therefore, it is required to list all members of the household.

Why do I need to fill out Social Security Number and sign the application?

These two sections are required fields and it is very important that these sections be completed. If this information is not completed, **the application will be processed and placed in hold.** However, a change in requirements now only requires the last four digits of the social security number for the adult signing the application needs to be listed rather than the entire social security number.

If I have more than one student going to school in the School District do I need to fill out more than one application?

NO, only complete **ONE APPLICATION PER FAMILY**. You may receive blank applications from more than one school at the beginning of each school year. It is not necessary to fill them all out.

If I have a student living at home that goes to a private school, charter school, or Pre-K school, should I include them on the application?

Yes, include them as Other Household Members at the bottom of the form.