

Free and Reduced Meal Application FAQs

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

No. Use one current school year Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application for all students 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: Chris Turner, Walpole School Nutrition at 415 Elm St., Walpole, MA 02081. Please DO NOT send application to your child's school office.

Who can receive free meals?

All children in households receiving benefits from MA SNAP or MA TANF are eligible for free meals.

Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are categorically eligible for free meal benefits. An application is not needed yet there does need to be documentation of status by a state or local entity familiar with the child's status. However, a change in the 2011-12 regulations states that Foster children may be included in the household application as part of the household size.

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.

Children may receive free or reduced price meals if your household's income is within the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Your children may qualify for free or reduced price meals if your household income falls at or below the limits on Eligibility Guidelines chart. (See chart on FAQs page of application)

What qualifies a student as homeless, runaway and migrant?

Yes. Do 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 or email John Queally, Director of Student Services at 508-660-2700 x227 or jqueally@walpole.k12.ma.us.

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

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 to read the letter carefully and follow the instructions. If any of the children in your household are missing from your eligibility notification, contact Chris Turner at 774-315-5642 or cturner@walpole.k12.ma.us immediately.

My child's application was approved last year. Do I need to fill out a new one?

Yes. Your child's application is only good for the current school year and for 30 days into the new school year. You will receive a reminder that your application will expire and you will need to reapply if you still need benefits.

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.

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. For example, children with a parent or guardian who becomes unemployed may become eligible for free and reduced price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.

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 **Dr. Lincoln L. Lynch, Walpole Superintendent of Schools, 135 School St., Walpole, MA 02081, 508-660-7200 x221 or emailing llynch@walpole.k12.ma.us**

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

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

Who should I include as members of my household?

Include yourself, all children who live with you and all other people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends).

What if my income is not always the same?

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, but do not include it if you only work overtime occasionally. If you have lost a job or had your hours or wages reduced, use your current income.

What if some household members have no income to report?

Household members may not receive some types of income we ask you to report on the application, or may not receive income at all. Whenever this happens, please write a zero (0) in the field. However, if any income fields are left empty or blank, those will also be counted as zeroes. Please be careful when leaving income fields blank, as we will assume you meant to do so.

Are applications available in other languages?

If you need an application in another language, you may download one at www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/family-friendly-application-translations or call Chris Turner at 774-315-5642.

We are in the Military. Do we report our income differently?

Your basic pay and cash bonuses must be reported as income. If you get any cash value allowances for off-base housing, food, or clothing, or receive Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance payments, it must also be included as income. However, if your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, do not include your housing allowance as income. Any additional combat pay resulting from deployment is also excluded from income.

What if there isn't enough space on the application for my family?

List any additional household members on a separate piece of paper and attach it to your application.

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

To find out how to apply for MA SNAP or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call the **MA SNAP Hotline at 1-866-950-3663**.

Why is it necessary to use the same name as it appears on the Birth Certificate?

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 upon 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 returned to the applicant**. However, a change in requirements now only requires the last four digits of the social security number for the adult signing the application to be listed rather than the entire social security number.

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, you should include them as Household Members on the form.

Have the eligibility guidelines changed from last school year?

The eligibility guidelines normally change each year and you do need to fill out a new application if you feel you still qualify for the meal benefits, unless you are notified otherwise.

Application Completion Tips

- Use **BLACK** or **BLUE** ink
- Print Clearly
- Use your student's name as it appears on their Birth Certificate
- List all other Household Members in correct sections. (Step 1 or 3)
- If you receive SNAP benefits, provide your Agency ID # (Step 2)
- Write the number of household members where indicated (Step 3)
- Complete Income information if required (Step 3)
- Fill in the last 4 digits of the Social Security Number for the signer or check off "No SSN". (Step 3)
- Complete Contact Information and include Today's Date. (Step 4)
- **SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED (Step 4)**
- Foster Child may be completed on separate form, however, a regulation now states that Foster Children may be included in the household application as part of the household size.

Direct Certification

What is Direct Certification?

Under direct certification, school districts use information from Massachusetts Health & Human Services Department to certify children to receive free meals. To qualify, the children's families must receive assistance from appropriate programs.

How do I know if my Student is Direct Certified?

Direct Certification Letters are sent to the homes of pre-approved students by the School Nutrition Office starting in mid-August and throughout the school year. If you receive this letter, no application is required.

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

Yes.

For more information or answers to any other questions, contact Chris Turner at 774-315-5642 or cturner@walpole.k12.ma.us