

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS 2016-2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. **Vernon Public Schools** offers healthy meals every school day. **Your children may qualify for either free meals or reduced-price meals.** The reduced price is \$ **0.30** for breakfast and \$ **0.40** for lunch. This packet includes an application for free or reduced-price meal benefits and detailed instructions.

NOTE: Children receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) benefits may be directly certified and automatically eligible for free meals without applying for benefits. Questions regarding SNAP/TFA and direct certification should be sent to the determining official **Paul Olson, Director of Food & Nutrition Services, 860-870-6000 ext. 152.** If you have received a NOTICE OF DIRECT CERTIFICATION for free meals, **do not** complete the application. Let the school know if any children in your household are **not** listed on the **Notice of Direct Certification** letter you received.

1. Who can get free or reduced-price meals?

- All children in households receiving SNAP or TFA benefits are eligible for free meals.
- 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 or runaway are eligible for free meals.
- Children may receive free or reduced-price meals if your household's income is within the limits of 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 this chart:

Reduced Federal Eligibility Income Chart Effective 7/1/2016 to 6/30/2017			
Household size	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$21,978	\$1,832	\$423
2	29,637	2,470	570
3	37,296	3,108	718
4	44,955	3,747	865
5	52,614	4,385	1,012
6	60,273	5,023	1,160
7	67,951	5,663	1,307
8	75,647	6,304	1,455
Each additional person	+7,696	+642	+148

- 2. How do I know if my children qualify as homeless 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 you have not been told your children will get free meals, please call or e-mail **Office of Pupil Services, 860-870-6000 ext. 133 or asmith@vernon-ct.gov.**
- 3. Do I need to fill out an application for each child?** No. Use **one** *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: **Your school's main office OR Food and Nutrition Services, Box 600, 30 Park Street, Vernon, CT 06066.**
- 4. Should I fill out an application if I received a letter this school year saying my children are already approved for free meals?** No, but please read the letter carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, contact **Paul Olson, Box 600, 30 Park Street, Vernon, CT 06066 OR 860-870-6000 ext. 151** immediately.
- 5. 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 that school year and for the first few days of this school year. You must send in a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for the new school year.

6. **I get WIC. Can my children get free meals?** Children in households participating in WIC **may** be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Please send in an application.
7. **Will the information I give be checked?** Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report.
8. **If I don't qualify now, may I apply later?** Yes, 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.
9. **What if I disagree with the school's decision about my application?** You should talk to school officials. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to: **Michael Purcaro, Director of Business and Finance, Box 600, 30 Park Street, Vernon, CT 06066 OR 860-870-6000 ext. 123.**
10. **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.
11. **What if my income is not always the same?** List the amount that you **normally** receive. For example, if you normally make \$1,000 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.
12. **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. When this happens, please write "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.
13. **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, these 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.
14. **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 to your application. Contact **Food & Nutrition Services, Box 600, 30 Park Street, Vernon, CT 06066 OR 860-870-6000 ext. 151** to receive a second application.
15. **My family needs more help. Are there other programs we might apply for?** To find out how to apply for SNAP benefits and to contact the Department of Social Services office in your town, contact United Way's free referral number **2-1-1** (free call, statewide).

If you have other questions or need help, call **860-870-6000 ext. 151**.

Sincerely,

Paul Olson
Director of Food and Nutrition Services

Nondiscrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly.

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