



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL MEALS

August 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to be ready to learn. **Johnson City Schools** offers healthy meals every school day. Please encourage your child to take advantage of breakfast and lunch at school every day.

Until June 30, 2022, ALL student meals are at **NO COST** to students. This helps families focus food dollars for night and weekend meals.

Most schools utilize a Grab and Go Cart option for breakfast along with breakfast in the cafeteria. This allows students who come to school close to (or after) the start of school to get morning nutrition that will positively affect their readiness to learn. Many of these items are pre-packaged and can be used easily as either a breakfast or a mid-morning snack.

If your child prefers special items from home, our staff can supplement those home items with some choices from our cafeterias. Again these are at NO COST while also supporting our school program. Our staff can answer questions and help your child make choices that meet this criteria.

With all meals at no cost, why should I still apply for “Free or Reduced Price” meals for my children?

There are other benefits both for your family AND the entire school community. If approved for Free/Reduced Price benefits, your children can qualify for fee waiver for school services like field trips, lab fees, and/or some graduation fees, as well as discounts for internet, cell phone, or other income-based services or scholarships. You may be eligible to receive additional funding through SNAP or P-EBT. The school community benefits with additional services from state and federal sources like Title I, BEP funding, e-rate technology and internet access, and more.

WHO CAN QUALIFY FOR THESE ADDITIONAL BENEFITS?

- All children in households receiving benefits from **TN SNAP** or **Families First**, are eligible for these benefits.
- Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible.
- Children participating in Head Start.
- Children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible.
- Children may qualify for benefits if your household’s income is within the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines.

FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART For School Year 2020-2021

Household size	Annual	Monthly	Twice per month	Every two weeks	Weekly
1	23,828	1,986	993	917	459
2	32,227	2,686	1,343	1,240	620
3	40,626	3,386	1,693	1,563	782
4	49,025	4,086	2,043	1,886	943
5	57,424	4,786	2,393	2,209	1,105
6	65,823	5,486	2,743	2,532	1,266
7	74,222	6,186	3,093	2,855	1,428
8	82,621	6,886	3,443	3,178	1,589
Each additional person:	8,399	700	350	324	162

2. 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 you haven’t been told your children will get free meals, please call **Sydney DeBusk, Homeless Coordinator at 423-434-5226**.
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 **cafeteria manager** or bring or mail to **Ann Hilliard, 100 East Maple Street, Johnson City, TN 37601**.

4. SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE ALREADY APPROVED? No, but please read the letter you got carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification letter, contact **Ann Hilliard at 423-434-5228** 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 you have received a letter from Johnson City School Food Service informing you that your child is already approved for free or reduced price meals for this school year.
6. I GET WIC. CAN MY CHILDREN GET BENEFITS? 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 at 423-434-5228. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to: **Karen McGahey, 423-434-5228, 100 East Maple Street, PO Box 1517, Johnson City, TN 37605**
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 \$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.
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. Whenever this happens, please write a 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, 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.
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 it to your application. Contact **Ann Hilliard at 423-434-5228**
15. MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR? To find out how to apply for **TN SNAP** or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call **866-311-4287**.

If you have other questions or need help, call **Ann Hilliard 423-434-5228**.

*Si necesita ayuda, por favor llame al teléfono: **Fernando DeSousa-Pereira, (423) 791-2080**.*

Sincerely,

Karen J. McGahey, School Meals Director