

Free and Reduced-Price Meals Eligibility Guidelines Set for the 2017-18 School Year

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has announced the eligibility guidelines for students to receive free and reduced price lunch, breakfast, and after-school snacks through the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. The policy took effect at the start of the 2018 fiscal year on July 1, 2017. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) sets the policy for each fiscal year to reflect any changes in the federal poverty guidelines.

The National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program are funded by USDA and administered by ISBE. Free and reduced-price meals ensure access to nutritious meals and snacks for families unable to pay the full price.

“Healthy students are better learners,” said State Superintendent of Education Tony Smith, Ph.D. “Many of our students count on these nutritious meals to fuel them to reach their full potential. Our vision for schools is that they support students’ cognitive growth, social and emotional development, and physical well-being. ISBE is very proud to administer school nutrition programs in Illinois.”

The following chart lists the household size and income criteria that determine students’ eligibility to receive free and reduced-price lunch, breakfast, and after-school snacks through the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. USDA’s [Fiscal Year 2018 Income Eligibility Guidelines](https://www.usda.gov/programs/nslp/eligibility) are also on the ISBE’s website at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IEG-18.pdf>.

Income Eligibility Guidelines

Effective from July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018

Household Size	Free Meals					Household Size	Reduced-Price Meals				
	130% Federal Poverty Guideline						185% Federal Poverty Guideline				
	Annual	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly		Annual	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	15,678	1,307	654	603	302	1	22,311	1,860	930	859	430
2	21,112	1,760	880	812	406	2	30,044	2,504	1,252	1,156	578
3	26,546	2,213	1,107	1,021	511	3	37,777	3,149	1,575	1,453	727
4	31,980	2,665	1,333	1,230	615	4	45,510	3,793	1,897	1,751	876
5	37,414	3,118	1,559	1,439	720	5	53,243	4,437	2,219	2,048	1,024
6	42,848	3,571	1,786	1,648	824	6	60,976	5,082	2,541	2,346	1,173
7	48,282	4,024	2,012	1,857	929	7	68,709	5,726	2,863	2,643	1,322
8	53,716	4,477	2,239	2,066	1,033	8	76,442	6,371	3,186	2,941	1,471
For each additional family member, add	5,434	453	227	209	105	For each additional family member, add	7,733	645	323	298	149

USDA provided the following information for families and guardians seeking free or reduced-price meals for students:

Children from households that meet federal guidelines are eligible for free or reduced-price meal services. Complete one application per household for all children that attend the same school district.

All meals served must meet the U. S. Department of Agriculture meal requirements. However, if a child has been determined by a doctor to have a disability and the disability would prevent the child from eating the regular school meal, this school will make substitutions prescribed by the doctor. If a substitution is needed, there will be no extra charge for the meal. If you believe your child needs substitutions because of a disability, please contact the school for further information.

Application forms are being sent to all homes with a letter to parents or guardians. To apply for free or reduced-price meal services, households must complete the application as soon as possible, sign it, and return it to the school. Additional copies of the application form are available in the principal's office in each school.

Households should answer all applicable questions on the form. An application which does not contain all the required information cannot be processed and approved by the school. Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals and are encouraged to complete an application for meal benefits.

The required information is as follows:

SNAP/TANF HOUSEHOLDS:

If the school provided you a letter that stated your child(ren) is eligible for free meals via the direct certification process, you do not have to complete this application to receive free meal benefits. Households that currently receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) for their child(ren), only have to list the child(ren)'s name and at least one SNAP or TANF case number and sign the application. If at least one SNAP/TANF case number is provided for any household member, then all children listed on the application are categorically eligible for free meals. Applications listing LINK card numbers cannot be used for free or reduced-price meals.

ALL OTHER HOUSEHOLDS: If a household's income is at or below the level shown on the income scale, children are eligible for either free or reduced-price meal services. Households must provide the following information: (1) the names of all household members; (2) the last four digits of the Social Security number of the adult household member signing the application, or indicate if the adult does not have a Social Security number; (3) the amount of income each household member received last month, how frequently it is paid, and where it came from (wages, child support, etc.); and (4) the signature of an adult household member.

The information on the application may be checked by school or other officials at any time during the school year.

Households may apply for benefits at any time during the school year. Households that are not eligible now but have a decrease in household income, an increase in household size, or a household member becomes unemployed, should fill out an application at that time.

Homeless, migrant, runaway youth, Head Start and foster care children, are categorically eligible for free meals. Please follow instructions and return form to school.

Households that do not agree with the ruling of the official may wish to discuss it with the school. Households also have the right to a fair hearing.