FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. **Southside School District** offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast meals are provided to students at no cost to the household. Lunch costs for paid students **$3.50**. **Your children may qualify for free meals or for reduced price meals**. This packet includes an application for free or reduced price meal benefits, and a set of detailed instructions. Below are some common questions and answers to help you with the application process.

1. WHO CAN GET FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS?
    - All children in households receiving benefits from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), 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, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free meals.
    - Children who receive Medicaid and meet the income eligibility requirements.
    - 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 this chart.

Income Eligibility Guidelines for School Year 2026-2027

Household Size	Federal Poverty Guidelines	Free Meals 130%					Reduced Meals 185%				
	Annual	Annual	Monthly	Twice Per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly	Annual	Monthly	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	15,960	20,748	1,729	865	798	399	29,526	2,461	1,231	1,136	568
2	21,640	28,132	2,345	1,173	1,082	541	40,034	3,337	1,669	1,540	770
3	27,320	35,516	2,960	1,480	1,366	683	50,542	4,212	2,106	1,944	972
4	33,000	42,900	3,575	1,788	1,650	825	61,050	5,088	2,544	2,349	1,175
5	38,680	50,284	4,191	2,096	1,934	967	71,558	5,964	2,982	2,753	1,377
6	44,360	57,668	4,806	2,403	2,218	1,109	82,066	6,839	3,420	3,157	1,579
7	50,040	65,052	5,421	2,711	2,502	1,251	92,574	7,715	3,858	3,561	1,781
8	55,720	72,436	6,037	3,019	2,786	1,393	103,082	8,591	4,296	3,965	1,983
each add'l person add	5,680	7,384	616	308	284	142	10,508	876	438	405	203

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 haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call or e-mail **Southside School District.**

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: **Carrie Douglas, 70 Scott Dr. Southside, AR 72501 (870)251-2264**.

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 you got carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, contact **Carrie Douglas, 70 Scott Dr. Southside, AR 72501, (870) 251-2264, carrie.douglas@southsideschools.org** immediately.

5. CAN I APPLY ONLINE? Yes! You are encouraged to complete an online application instead of a paper application if you are able. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper application. Visit **Southside School District homepage** to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact **Carrie Douglas, 70 Scott Dr, Southside, AR 72501, (870) 251-2264, carrie.douglas@southsideschools.org if you have any questions about the online application.**

6. 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, through **September 24, 2026**. You must send in a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for the new school year. If you do not send in a new application that is approved by the school or you have not been notified that your child is eligible for free meals, your child will be charged the full price for meals.

7. 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.

8. WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED? Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report.

9. 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.

10. 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: **Carrie Douglas, 70 Scott Dr. Southside, AR 72501, (870)251-2264, carrie.douglas@southsideschools.org**

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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, 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.

15. 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 **Carrie Douglas, 70 Scott Dr. Southside, AR 72501, (870)251-2264, carrie.douglas@southsideschools.org to receive a second application.**

16. MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR? To find out how to apply for **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**, contact your local assistance office or call **501-682-8276**.

If you have other questions or need help, call **(870) 251-2264**.
Sincerely,

Non-Discrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly.
In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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