

July 30, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn Southwest Public Schools offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast costs **\$2.00**; lunch costs **PK-6th \$2.90 and 7th-12th \$3.50**. **Your children may qualify for free or reduced price meals.** Reduced price is **.30** for breakfast and **.40** for lunch. If your child(ren) qualified for free or reduced price meals at the end of last school year, you must submit a new application by **September 11, 2018** in order to avoid an interruption in meal benefits.

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 the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) 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 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.

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 Southwest Schools, **Todd Porter, Superintendent** todd.porter@swpschools.org or call **308-692-3223 or 855-692-3172 (toll free)**.

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: **Nanci Stritt, Southwest Schools, 719 E. Street Indianola, NE 69034**

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 **Nanci Stritt 719 E. Street, Indianola, NE 69034 or call 308-364-2613 or 855-364-2067 (toll free) immediately.**

5. CAN I APPLY ONLINE? You are encouraged to complete an online application instead of a paper application if your school district makes this option available. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper 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. You must send in a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for the new school year.
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: **Todd Porter, Superintendent, PO Box 187 Bartley, NE 69020 or call 308-692-3223 or 855-692-3172 (toll free) or e-mail: todd.porter@swpschools.org**. 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 Nanci.stritt@swpschools.org or call 308-364-2613 or 855-364-2067 (toll free) 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 or other assistance benefits, please go online to ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov or call 1-800-383-4278.

If you have other questions or need help, call **Nanci Stritt 308-364-2613 or 855-364-2067 (toll free)**.

Sincerely,

Instructions for Completing the Free & Reduced Price School Meals Family Application

If your household receives benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), follow these instructions:

- Part 1:** List each child's name, the school they attend and their grade.
- Part 2:** Enter household's Master Case Number if the household qualifies for SNAP, TANF or FDPIR.
- Part 3:** Skip this part.
- Part 4:** Sign the form. The last four digits of a Social Security Number do not need to be reported.
- Part 5:** Answer this question if you choose to.

If you are applying for a FOSTER CHILD, follow these instructions:

If all children in the household are foster children:

- Part 1:** List all foster children, the school they attend and their grade. Check the box indicating the child is a foster child.
- Part 2:** Skip this part.
- Part 3:** Skip this part.
- Part 4:** Sign the form. The last four digits of a Social Security Number do not need to be reported.
- Part 5:** Answer this question if you choose to.

If some of the children in the household are foster children:

- Part 1:** List all children, including foster children, the school they attend and their grade. Check the box if the child is a foster child.
- Part 2:** If the household does not have a Master Case Number, skip this part.
- Part 3:** Follow these instructions to report total household income from last month.
 - Column 1 – Household Names:** List the first and last name of **each** person living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives or friends) who share income and expenses. Attach another sheet of paper if necessary.
 - Column 2 - Gross Income and How Often it was Received:** For each household member, list each type of income received for the month. You must also report how often the money is received – weekly, every other week, twice a month, or monthly.

Earnings from Work: For earnings, be sure to list the **gross income**, not the take-home pay. **Gross income is the amount earned before taxes and other deductions.** You should be able to find it on your pay stub or your boss can tell you. List salary, wages, cash bonuses and strike benefits. For individuals who are self-employed, report income after expenses from business, farm or rental property. If you are in the military, list basic pay, cash bonuses, allowances for off-base housing, food and clothing. Do not include combat pay, Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA) payments or privatized housing allowances. Finally, **do not include income** from SNAP, FDPIR, WIC, Federal education benefits and foster payments received by the family from the placing agency.

Public Assistance/Child Support/Alimony: list unemployment benefits, worker's compensation, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash assistance from state or local government, Veteran's benefits (VA benefits), child support payments and alimony payments.

Pensions/Retirement/All Other Income: list Social Security payments (including railroad retirement and black lung benefits), private pensions or disability, income from trusts or estates, annuities, investment income, earned interest, rental income and *regular* cash payments received from outside the household.

If you have no income, write "0" or leave the income field blank. If you do this, you are certifying there is no income to report.

Part 4: An adult household member must sign the form and list the last four digits of their Social Security Number OR mark the box if he/she doesn't have one.

Part 5: Answer this question if you choose to.

For ALL OTHER HOUSEHOLDS, including WIC households, follow these instructions:

Part 1: List all children, including foster children, the school they attend and their grade. Check the box if the child is a foster child.

Part 2: If the household does not have a Master Case Number, skip this part.

Part 3: Follow these instructions to report total household income from last month.

Column 1 – Household Names: List the first and last name of **each** person living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives or friends) who share income and expenses. Attach another sheet of paper if necessary.

Column 2 - Gross Income and How Often it was Received: For each household member, list each type of income received for the month. You must also report how often the money is received – weekly, every other week, twice a month, or monthly.

Earnings from Work: For earnings, be sure to list the **gross income**, not the take-home pay. **Gross income is the amount earned before taxes and other deductions.** You should be able to find it on your pay stub or your boss can tell you. List salary, wages, cash bonuses and strike benefits. For individuals who are self-employed, report income after expenses from business, farm or rental property. If you are in the military, list basic pay, cash bonuses, allowances for off-base housing, food and clothing. Do not include combat pay, Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA) payments or privatized housing allowances. Finally, **do not include income** from SNAP, FDPIR, WIC, Federal education benefits and foster payments received by the family from the placing agency.

Public Assistance/Child Support/Alimony: list unemployment benefits, worker's compensation, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash assistance from state or local government, Veteran's benefits (VA benefits), child support payments and alimony payments.

Pensions/Retirement/All Other Income: list Social Security payments (including railroad retirement and black lung benefits), private pensions or disability, income from trusts or estates, annuities, investment income, earned interest, rental income and *regular* cash payments received from outside the household.

If you have no income, write "0" or leave the income field blank. If you do this, you are certifying there is no income to report.

Part 4: An adult household member must sign the form and list the last four digits of their Social Security Number OR mark the box if he/she doesn't have one.

Part 5: Answer this question if you choose to.