

Free and Reduced Meal Application FAQs

1. What measures can I take to expedite my free and reduced-price applications approval?

- Apply online at www.schoolcafe.com/ALEXANDRIACPS;
- Print clearly;
- Use your student's name as it appears on birth certificate - nicknames and family abbreviations will slow down processing and should not be used;
- Provide student's date of birth, grade, and school;
- List student's income or mark the "no income box";
- If household receives SNAP (food stamp) or TANF, you **MUST** provide assigned case number. **Do not use EBT card number. Household should contact case worker if unsure of case number;**
- List all Household Members, their income, and how often money is received. If no income, mark the "no income box";
- Fill in last 4 numbers of Social Security Number of the signer or mark "NONE";
- SIGNATURE IS REQUIRED for the signer

ALL APPLICATIONS MUST HAVE THE ABOVE INFORMATION; OTHERWISE, IT CAN DELAY PROCESSING OR WILL BE RETURNED TO APPLICANT!

2. Do I need to fill out an application for each child?

Only **ONE** application is required for ALL students in household. Households must reapply every school year to determine eligibility. Submitting an application does not mean you are automatically approved. Incomplete applications cannot be processed. Paper applications can be mailed, faxed to 703-619-8990, or emailed to food@acps.k12.va.us. *Email is preferred.*

3. What if there is not enough space on the application to list everyone in household?

List any additional household members on a separate piece of paper and attach it to your application or contact our office to provide information

4. I am an ACPS student and 18+ years old, can I submit my own application?

If you reside at home with a parent or legal guardian and are supported by them, the parent **MUST** complete and sign the application regardless of student's age. If student resides on their own and is solely responsible for themselves (self-sufficient/emancipated minor), then can a student submit their own application.

5. Who can receive free or reduced meals?

There are several ways that your child(ren) may be eligible for meals at no cost:

- Student(s) attending a CEP school;
- Direct certified students;
- Household income falls within the limits on the Federal Income Guidelines.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

6. What does Direct Certified mean? How will I know if my child is directly certified?

Direct Certified students automatically receive meal benefits for the entire year. This means the state has approved your child(ren) due to either having a SNAP (food stamp), TANF, or Medicaid number or you have a child identified as Foster. You may call us to remove your child from the free and reduced program if you do not want this benefit. Direct Certification letters are mailed and/or emailed. If the letter you received does not have all your children listed, please contact us.

7. Can homeless, runaway and migrant children get free meals?

Yes. Children who meet the definition of “migrant, homeless, or runaway” should contact their school counselor or the ACPS Homeless/Foster Liaison. *Our office receives a list of these children from the ACPS Homeless/Foster Liaison.*

8. I received a letter saying my children are approved for free or reduced-price meals for this school year. Should I fill out an application?

If you received a letter for the current school year, then NO, you do not need to fill out a new application. Please carefully read the letter to **ensure it has the current school year** and make sure each of your children are listed on the letter as being eligible.

9. I receive WIC (Women, Infants and Children) benefits. Can my child get free meals?

Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduce-price meals. Please submit an application so eligibility can be determined.

10. Will the information I give be checked?

Yes, we may ask you to send proof of the information you provide (ie: pay stubs, letter from employer, etc). Proof of income can be requested at anytime throughout the school year.

11. If I do not qualify now, may I apply later?

You may apply at any time during the current school year.

12. What if I disagree with the school’s decision about my application?

If you do not agree with the decision regarding your application or the result of verification, you may discuss it with the School Nutrition Services department. You also have the right to a fair hearing. A fair hearing may be requested by calling or writing Dr. Alicia Hart, 1340 Braddock Road, Alexandria, VA 22314; 703-619-8289.

13. May I apply if someone in my household is not a U.S. citizen?

You nor your child(ren) need to be a U.S. citizen to apply for free or reduced-price meals.

14. Who should I include as members of my household?

Include yourself, all children (infants, school age and younger, college students) who live with you and all other people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends). Be sure to include any income they receive.

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15. What income do I include?

Gross income and how often you receive this income; weekly (W), every two weeks (E), twice per month (T), monthly (M), or annually/yearly (A) must be listed from all jobs. If you do not receive any income, leave blank or write -0-. **Gross income is not the same as take home pay.** Gross income is the amount earned before taxes and deductions. Income includes monthly wages, tips before taxes, welfare, child support, alimony, pensions, retirement, Social Security, Worker's Compensation, unemployment benefits, strike benefits, Supplemental Security Income, Veteran's benefits (VA benefits), disability benefits, regular contributions from people who do not live in your household and ANY OTHER INCOME. Report net income for self-owned business, farm or rental income. **Do not provide your hourly rate!**

16. What if my income is not always the same?

Typically, you will provide the amount you receive BEFORE deductions. For example, if you normally receive \$1,000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only received \$900, put down that you get \$1,000 per month as this is your normal income. If you are paid for overtime, include it, but not if you receive it occasionally. Please contact the School Nutrition Services department for further instructions.

17. We are in the military, how do we report our income?

Basic pay and cash bonuses must be reported as income. Cash value allowances for off-base housing, food, or clothing 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.

18. Why do I need to fill out Social Security Number and sign the application?

These two sections are required fields. If this information is not complete, the application will be incomplete and returned to the applicant. You must include the last four digits of the social security number of the adult household member who signs the application. If signer does not have a social security number, please mark the appropriate box to indicate NONE which indicates to our department that you do not have one.

19. If I have a student living at home that goes to a private school, charter school, head start program, or college, should I include them on the application?

Yes, you will include their information as they are part of household.

20. When will my student's application be approved?

Please allow ten (10) working days for application to be processed. Your child(ren) will need money until application approval has been determined. Students who were approved for free or reduced-price meals last school year will have the same eligibility for the first 30 days of school **UNLESS** a new application is processed and denied. Households must re-apply each school year to determine eligibility for current school year.

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21. What are the prices for breakfast and lunch?

	Grade	Price
Approved for Free and Reduced-price meal benefits (Breakfast <u>AND</u> Lunch)	ALL	\$0.00
Breakfast		\$1.75
Elementary Lunch	PK-5	\$2.85
Secondary Lunch	6-12	\$3.05
Adult/Visitor Breakfast		A la carte
Adult/Visitor Lunch		\$3.80
One milk accompanies each complete meal served.		

22. How do I pay for my student's meals?

Students new to ACPS will need money if an application has not been approved for them. Parents can add money to their child(ren)'s account by using our online payment system, SchoolCafé, at www.schoolcafe.com/ALEXANDRIACPS. We also accept cash or checks. If paying with a check, make payable to School Nutrition Services.

23. Why does my child have charges?

Charges accrue on your child's account if a student has no funds and receives a meal. Parents are liable for these charges and can make incremental payments until balance is paid off.

24. My family needs more help. Are there other programs we might apply for?

To apply for other assistance benefits, contact the City of Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services at 2525 Mt Vernon Ave, Alexandria, VA 22301; 703-746-5700 or <https://www.alexandriava.gov/DCHS>. Your school counselor might also be able to direct you to services you may qualify for.

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