

PUBLIC RELEASE

Public Release

Opelika City Schools today announced its policy for free and reduced-price meals for children served in schools under the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program. Local school officials have adopted the following household size and income criteria for determining eligibility:

Children need healthy meals to learn and **Opelika City Schools** offers healthy meals every school day. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic all schools in Alabama will be serving breakfast and lunch at no cost to students, as well as After School Snack at the schools that participate in an After School Programs.

During this COVID-19 Pandemic, the PEBT program has allowed children to receive benefits equal to the National School Lunch Program reimbursement rate, which is \$6.82 per day for each eligible child. Children may continue to access meals from local school districts while receiving P-EBT benefits. To gain P-EBT eligibility, households that experienced decreased income may apply for free or reduced-price meals at the schools their children attend. 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 Alabama SNAP **and** Alabama TANF, 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 are directly certified are eligible to receive free meals.
- When known to Opelika City Schools, households will be notified of their children's eligibility for free meals based on their participation (or a household member's participation) in the:
 - o Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR); or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), if the State program meets Federal standards.
- When known to **Opelika City Schools**, households will be notified of any child's eligibility for free meals based on the individual child's designation as Other Source Categorically Eligible, as defined by law. Children are determined Other Source Categorically Eligible if they are:
 - Homeless,
 - Migrant,
 - Runaway,
 - A foster child, or
 - Enrolled in Head Start or an eligible pre-kindergarten program (see: SP 40-2013: Q&As Regarding the Participation of Head Start Programs in Child Nutrition Programs, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/gas-regarding-participation-head-start-programs-child-nutrition-programs-0>).

INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES											
Effective from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022											
HOUSEHOLD SIZE	FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES	REDUCED PRICE MEALS - 185 %					FREE MEALS - 130 %				
	ANNUAL	ANNUAL	MONTHLY	TWICE PER MONTH	EVERY TWO WEEKS	WEEKLY	ANNUAL	MONTHLY	TWICE PER MONTH	EVERY TWO WEEKS	WEEKLY
48 CONTIGUOUS STATES, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, GUAM, AND TERRITORIES											
1	12,880	23,828	1,986	993	917	459	16,744	1,396	698	644	322
2	17,420	32,227	2,686	1,343	1,240	620	22,646	1,888	944	871	436
3	21,960	40,626	3,386	1,693	1,563	782	28,548	2,379	1,190	1,098	549
4	26,500	49,025	4,086	2,043	1,886	943	34,450	2,871	1,436	1,325	663
5	31,040	57,424	4,786	2,393	2,209	1,105	40,352	3,363	1,682	1,552	776
6	35,580	65,823	5,486	2,743	2,532	1,266	46,254	3,855	1,928	1,779	890
7	40,120	74,222	6,186	3,093	2,855	1,428	52,156	4,347	2,174	2,006	1,003
8	44,660	82,621	6,886	3,443	3,178	1,589	58,058	4,839	2,420	2,233	1,117
For each add'l family member, add	4,540	8,399	700	350	324	162	5,902	492	246	227	114

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 **[school, homeless liaison or migrant coordinator]**.
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 **Kathy Mitchell 334-745-9700**.

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 **Kathy Mitchell 334-745-9700** 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 [website] to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact [name, address, phone number, e-mail] if you have any questions about the online application.
- No, an online application is not available at this time.
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 **[date]**. 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. In accordance with program regulations school officials will be verifying the income of some households at some time during the school year. Selected households will be requested to provide income documentation in order to continue receiving free and reduced-price meals.
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: **Kenneth Burton 334-745-9700**.
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. DO I HAVE TO PROVIDE MY SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER? Only the last 4 digits of the social security number of the household's primary wage earner or another adult household member (or an indication of "none") is required.
15. MAY I DECLINE BENEFITS? Yes. Households notified of their children's eligibility must contact **Opelika City Schools**, or school if they choose to decline the free meal benefits.
16. WHAT IF ALL CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR BENEFITS ARE NOT ON THE NOTICE OF ELIGIBILITY LETTER? If children or households receive benefits under Assistance Programs or Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs and are not listed on the notice of eligibility and are not notified by the school of their free meal benefits, the parent or guardian should contact the school or should submit an income application.
17. 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.
18. 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 **Kathy Mitchell 334-745-9700** kathy.mitchell@opelikaschools.org to receive a second application.
19. MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR? To find out how to apply for Alabama SNAP or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call Alabama hotline number 1- 800-382-0499.

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(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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