

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The **Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES School Food Service Program** believes that one of the most important ways in which we can help our children perform better in their classrooms is to provide them with the nutrition necessary for the healthy growth of their minds and bodies. Therefore, we provide breakfast and/or lunch for students every school day.

We invite all students to show their support for their school food service program through frequent participation. Students may buy lunch for \$2.75 and/or breakfast for \$1.50.

Children from households that meet Federal income guidelines (outlined below) are eligible for free meals or reduced price meals. Reduced price meals cost each eligible student \$0/FREE for lunch and breakfast. To apply for free or reduced price meals, complete the enclosed application, sign it, and return it to the school as soon as possible – any time after July 1. (If your family receives public assistance, you will most likely be approved for free meals through the Direct Certification process). Please refer to the guidelines contained in this letter when completing the application.

- 1. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD?** No, complete the application to apply for free or reduced price meals. For most families, please use one Free and Reduced Price School Meal Application for all students in your household. If your children attend different districts, they will need an application for each district. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information. **Please complete the application online (EZMealApp.com) or return the completed application to: OHM BOCES Food Service, 9499 Weston Rd., New Hartford, NY 13413, or your school district's main office.**
- 2. WHO CAN GET FREE MEALS?** All children in households receiving benefits from **SNAP, the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations** or **TANF**, can get free meals regardless of your income. Categorical eligibility for free meal benefits is extended to all children in a household when the application lists an Assistance Program's case number for any household member. Also, your children can get free meals if your household's gross income is within the free limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Households with children who are categorically eligible through an Other Source Categorically Eligible designation, as defined by law, may be eligible for free benefits and should contact the SFA for assistance in receiving benefits.
- 3. CAN FOSTER CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS?** Yes, foster children who are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court, are eligible for free meals. Any foster child in the household is eligible for free meals regardless of income. Foster children may also be included as a member of the foster family if the foster family chooses to also apply for benefits for other children, including children in foster care as household members may help other children in the household qualify for benefits. If non-foster children in a foster family are not eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits, an eligible foster child will still receive free benefits.
- 4. CAN HOMELESS, RUNAWAY AND MIGRANT CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS?** Yes, children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant qualify for free meals. If you haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call 315-738-0848 to see if they qualify.
- 5. WHO CAN GET REDUCED PRICE MEALS?** Your children may be approved as reduced price eligible if your household income is within the reduced-price limits on the Federal Eligibility Income Chart, shown on this letter. Beginning July 1, 2019, students in New York State who are approved for reduced price meals will receive breakfast and lunch meals and snacks served through the Afterschool Snack Program at no charge.
- 6. SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE APPROVED FOR FREE MEALS?** Please read the letter you got carefully and follow the instructions. Call 315-738-0848 if you have questions.
- 7. MY CHILD'S APPLICATION WAS APPROVED LAST YEAR. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT ANOTHER ONE?** Yes. Your child's application is only good for that school year and for the first 30 operating 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.
- 8. I GET WIC CAN MY CHILD(REN) GET FREE MEALS?** Children in households participation in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced price meals. Please fill out a Free/Reduced Price Meal Application.
- 9. WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED?** Yes, and we may also ask you to send written proof.
- 10. 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 or reduced price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.
- 11. 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 315.738.0848.

- 12. MAY I APPLY IF SOMEONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD IS NOT A U.S. CITIZEN?** Yes. You or your child(ren) do not have to be U.S. citizens to qualify for free or reduced price meals.
- 13. WHO SHOULD I INCLUDE AS MEMBERS OF MY HOUSEHOLD?** You must include all people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends) who share income and expenses. You must include yourself and all children living with you. If you live with other people who are economically independent (for example, people who you do not support, who do not share income with you or your children, and who pay a pro-rated share of expenses), do not include them.
- 14. WHAT IF MY INCOME IS NOT ALWAYS THE SAME?** List the amount that you normally receive. For example, if you normally make \$1,000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only made \$900, put down that you made \$1,000 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.
- 15. WE ARE IN THE MILITARY. DO WE INCLUDE OUR HOUSING ALLOWANCE AS INCOME?** If you get an off-base housing allowance, it must be included as income. However, if your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, do not include your housing allowance as income.
- 16. MY SPOUSE IS DEPLOYED TO A COMBAT ZONE. IS HIS/HER COMBAT PAY COUNTED AS INCOME?** No, if the combat pay is received in addition to his/her basic pay because of his/her deployment and it wasn't received before he/she was deployed, combat pay is not counted as income. Contact your school for more information.

2022-2023 INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES
Reduced Price Meals -or- Free Milk

REDUCED PRICE ELIGIBILITY SCALE					
REDUCED PRICE LUNCH & BREAKFAST					
HOUSE HOLD SIZE	ANNUAL	MONTHLY	TWICE PER MONTH	EVERY TWO WEEKS	WEEKLY
1	\$ 25,142	\$ 2,096	\$ 1,048	\$ 967	\$ 484
2	\$ 33,874	\$ 2,823	\$ 1,412	\$ 1,303	\$ 652
3	\$ 42,606	\$ 3,551	\$ 1,776	\$ 1,639	\$ 820
4	\$ 51,338	\$ 4,279	\$ 2,140	\$ 1,975	\$ 988
5	\$ 60,070	\$ 5,006	\$ 2,503	\$ 2,311	\$ 1,156
6	\$ 68,802	\$ 5,734	\$ 2,867	\$ 2,647	\$ 1,324
7	\$ 77,534	\$ 6,462	\$ 3,231	\$ 2,983	\$ 1,492
8	\$ 86,266	\$ 7,189	\$ 3,595	\$ 3,318	\$ 1,659
* EACH ADD'L PERSON ADD	\$ 8,732	\$ 728	\$ 364	\$ 336	\$ 168

- 17. 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, contact your local assistance office or call 1.800.342.3009.

HOW TO APPLY: To get free or reduce price meals for your children carefully complete one application following the instructions for your household and return it to the designated office listed on the application. If you now receive SNAP, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) for any children or participate in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), the application must include the children's names, the household SNAP, TANF or FDPIR case number and the signature of an adult household member. All children should be listed on the same application. If you do not list a SNAP, TANIF or FDPIR case number for any household member, the application must include the names of everyone in the household, the amount of income for each household member and the last four digits of that adult's social security number or check the box if the adult does not have a social security number. **An application for free and reduced priced benefits cannot be approved unless complete eligibility information is submitted, as indicated on the application and in the instructions.** Contact your local Department of Social Services for your SNAP or TANF case number or complete the income portion of the application. No application is necessary if the household was notified by the SFA their children have been directly certified. If the household is not sure if their children have been directly certified, the household should contact the school.

REPORTING CHANGES: The benefits that you are approved for at the time of application are effective for the entire school year and up to 30 operating days into the new school year (or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first). You no longer need to report changes for an increase in income or decrease in household size, or if you no longer receive SNAP.

INCOME EXCLUSIONS: The value of any child care provided or arranged, or any amount received as payment for such child care or reimbursement for costs incurred for such care under the Child Care Development (Block Grant) Fund should not be considered as income for this program.

REDUCED PRICE ELIGIBLE STUDENTS: Beginning July 1, 2019, students in New York State that are approved for reduced price meals will receive breakfast and lunch meals at no charge.

In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age or disability.

MEAL SERVICE TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES: Federal regulations require schools and institutions to serve meals at no extra charge to children with a disability which may restrict their diet. A student with a disability is defined in 7CFR Part 15b.3 of Federal regulations, as one who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities are defined to include functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. You must request the special meals from the school and provide the school with medical certification from a medical doctor. If you believe your child needs substitutions because of a disability, please get in touch with us for further information, as there is specific information that the medical certification must contain.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The United States Department of Agriculture has approved the release of students names and eligibility status, without parent/guardian consent, to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of federal education programs such as Title I and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), which are United States Department of Education programs used to determine areas such as the allocation of funds to schools, to evaluate socioeconomic status of the school's attendance area, and to assess education progress. Information may also be released to State health or State education programs administered by the State agency or local nutrition programs similar to the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, all information contained in the free and reduced price application may be released to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of programs authorized under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) or Child Nutrition Act (CNA); including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the Special Milk Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman Infants and Children (WIC); the Comptroller General of the United States for audit purposes, and federal, State or local law enforcement officials investigating alleged violation of the programs under the NSLA or CNA.

REAPPLICATION: You may apply for benefits any time during the school year. Also, if you are not eligible now, but during the school year become unemployed, have a decrease in household income, or an increase in family size you may request and complete an application at the time.

The disclosure of eligibility information not specifically authorized by the NSLA requires a written consent statement from the parent/guardian. We will let you know when your application is approved or denied.

Sincerely,

Kate Dorr, RDN, MBA

OHM BOCES School Food Services Director

NONDISCRIMINATION 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, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact the USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the **USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form**, (AD-3027) found online at <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-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 using one of the options below:

(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

(3) EMAIL:

program.intake@usda.gov.

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