

IOWA ELIGIBILITY FAQ

Children need healthy meals to learn. Gilbert Community schools offers healthy meals every day. Your child(ren) may qualify for free meals or reduced-priced meals.

Free or Reduced Priced Meals

Who can get free or reduced priced meals?

- All children in households receiving benefits from **Food Assistance or the Family Investment (FIP)**, 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 who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free meals.
- Children may receive free or reduced priced meals if your household's income is at or below the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. (Requires submitting an Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals/Milk.)

Who can get Free Milk?

- If your school participates in the Special Milk Program for half day preschoolers, your child may be eligible for free milk. Children who buy extra milk with a meal or if they eat breakfast or lunch and have an afternoon milk break, they are not eligible to receive free milk.

How do I know if my children qualify as homeless, migrant or runaway?

- Do members of your household lack a permanent address? Are you staying in a shelter, hotel, or another 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 Mell Wooden, the homeless liaison/migrant coordinator, at 515-232-3748 ext 4143.

What if I have foster children?

- Households with foster and non-foster children may choose to include the foster child as a household member, as this may help other children in the household qualify for benefits. If the foster family is not eligible for free or reduced priced meal benefits, that does not prevent a foster child from receiving free meal benefits.

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

- No, Use one Free and Reduced Price School Meal Application for all students in your household. We cannot approve an application if it is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information.

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 Foodservice immediately at 515-232-3738 ext 5102 as eligibility for free meals is extended to all school-aged children in your household.

Can I apply online?

- No, All applications will be processed by paper registration process or at any time during the school year.

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. When the carry-over period ends, unless you are notified that your children will receive free meals, the children must pay full price for the school meals.

I get WIC. Can my children get free meals?

- Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free and reduced- price meals. Please complete an application.

Will the information be checked?

- Yes, We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report. You are not required to provide proof with your application.

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 be eligible for free or reduced price meals if the households income drops below the income limit, if your household size goes up, or if you start getting Food Assistance, FIP or other benefits.

What if I disagree with the school's decision about my application?

- You should talk to school officials. You may ask for a review by writing or calling the school Business Office Manager, Gail Hopkins at 515-232-4155.

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-priced meals.

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 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 lost a job or had hours or wages reduced, use your current income.

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 assume you meant to do so.

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 also 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. There are currently no active Military Housing Projects in Iowa as found on Active Military Housing Projects. Any additional combat pay resulting from deployment is also excluded from income.

Can children with disabilities get food substitutions?

- If a child has a disability, as determined by a licensed medical professional, and the disability prevents the child from eating the regular school meal, the school will make substitutions prescribed by the licensed medical professional. If a substitution is needed, there will be no extra charge for the meal. Please note, however, that the school is not required to make a substitution for a food allergy, unless it meets the definition of disability.