

Food Services Q&A

The District #25 School Food Service office would like to welcome everyone back to school for the 2008-09 school year. We hope this information is helpful and answers any questions you may have about our program. If you have a question or concern that is not addressed, please contact our office at 235-3245 for further assistance.

Q: How do I apply for the Free and Reduced meals program?

A: There are several ways to obtain an application. First, applications will be on hand on August 7 at all elementary school registrations from 11:00 am – 7:00 pm. Second, all elementary students will receive an application from the school during the first week of classes. Third, you may pick up an application at any school cafeteria or from our main office at 3115 Poleline Rd. Fourth, applications may be printed from our website at www.myschoolfood.com (both English and Spanish are available).

Please note that we are unable to process faxed or emailed copies of the application. An original signature is required.

Q: When do I apply?

A: Anyone may apply for meal benefits at any time during the school year. If your student ended the school year in May 2008 as free or reduced in our district, that eligibility will carry into this school year with them. **New applications need to be received the first few weeks of school for your child to continue receiving meal benefits after September 30.** If your student's eligibility changes, it will become effective when the new application is processed. If we have not received and processed a new application before September 30, free and reduced students will begin being charged full price until a new application is received. You will be responsible for paying any charges your student incurs. **Because of the heavy volume of applications in September each year, we encourage parents to get their applications into the cafeteria staff within the first 2 weeks of school.**

Q: I have students at more than one school. Do I need to complete separate applications?

A: No. Our applications are designed to provide all the information for your family on one application. It does not matter which schools your students attend or which school the application is turned in to.

Q: Where do I turn my application in?

A: All applications need to be returned to the school cafeteria staff or to the Food Service office at 3115 Poleline Rd. Please do NOT turn applications into the school office or your student's teacher.

Q: I received a letter from the Health Department stating I qualified for free meals? Do I still need to complete an application?

A: No, however, in order for you to receive free meals based on a Health Department letter, **you MUST turn the Health Department letter into the cafeteria at your child's school cafeteria.** The Health Department does not inform us of your eligibility. This is your responsibility. If you have misplaced this letter (direct certification), you will need to fill out a district application for Free & Reduced meals in its place.

Q: How will I know if I qualify?

A: All applications and certifications are processed as quickly as possible as they are received. You will be mailed a letter informing you of your status within approximately a week of our receiving your application. *If you do NOT receive a letter within 2 weeks of your application, please contact our office at 235-3265.*

Q: How much do student meals cost?

A: In the secondary schools, lunch is \$1.80/day and breakfast is \$1.35/day. In the elementary schools, lunch is \$1.70/day and breakfast if \$1.35/day. If your student(s) receive meals at the reduced rate, that cost is \$0.40/day for lunch and \$0.30/day for breakfast, regardless of where they attend.

Q: How do I pay for my student's meals?

A: All students have an account at their school. You may send money daily, weekly, monthly, or any combination thereof. The money is placed into the students account as a credit, and is used each time the student purchases a meal or ala carte items. We accept either cash or check. You may also register at PayPams.com for an online payment option that utilizes debit cards and direct transfers. This site charges a small fee and requires a minimum \$10.00 transaction.

Q: How does my student access their account?

A: All students are issued a random 3-5 number "PIN" that they press into a keypad at the end of the serving line. Students need to keep this number confidential. If you feel their number needs to be changed, contact the cafeteria staff and they can change it for you. We are unable to assign specific PIN numbers.

Q: How do I know when my student is out of money?

A: Elementary students should receive a red stamp on the back of their hand informing you when they are within approximately 2 days of being out of money. You may also call the cafeteria staff if you are in question of their balance. All students may ask any cashier for their balance. If you have an account at PayPams.com, you can register for emails notifying you of low balances as well as set up automatic drafts when your student's balance reaches a low level. This is a free service and requires no deposits into student accounts.

Q: Can I place blocks or limits on my student's account?

A: Yes. You can place spending limits or blocks on your students account. If you would like to do so, please call our office 235-3245 for specific details and limitations. **All students, regardless of eligibility will be allowed to charge meals unless the parent specifies otherwise. This needs to be done each school year.**

Q: What is your charging policy?

A: We allow students to charge meals at all locations. Students will be reminded that they need to bring money if their balance is negative. If you do not want your student(s) to charge, please contact the cafeteria staff or the Food Service office and we can put a message on their account(s).

Q: What about overdue accounts?

A: The Food Service Office mails letters when your student's balance is \$3.50 or greater in the hole. The address we use is the address that is on file at your student's school, so it is important to keep this current. If you receive letters from us that you feel are in error, please call us so we can address your concerns.

Accounts that remain overdue for an extended period of time will be turned in for collections. You will be notified at the address on file at your child's school before this action is taken. If you receive a notice that you are being placed in collection, please contact our office immediately at 235-3265.

Q: My child has special dietary restrictions or concerns. Can your menu work for my child?

A: School District #25 employs a registered dietitian to assist you with special needs and restrictions your student may have. Please feel free to contact Dawn Stone, RD, at 235-3263 to discuss your circumstances or any other menu related questions or concerns you may have.