

## **Federal School Meals BENEFITS Program** **FREE, healthy meals for students so they can learn.**

**We encourage families to apply for this important benefit. Make sure your students get a healthy meal at school and help our schools access other resources for education with high participation in this program.**

Students approved for free or reduced meals can choose a healthy, well balanced school breakfast and school lunch at **no cost**.

**Vermont is the first state in the nation to eliminate the reduced price category for school meals so families eligible at the reduced level will now receive FREE meals. Send a message of your support for this change. Apply for school meals, today!**

(Full price meals at Lincoln Community School are: \$1.50 for breakfast and \$2.50 for lunch. )

All applications will be processed through the ANESU Food Service Cooperative (not the school) as soon as they are received. Only one person will see your application and all information is kept completely confidential.

### **TURN IN AN APPLICATION TODAY!**

Applications should be turned in to your school's main office as soon as possible.

For added privacy please return forms in a sealed envelope. It is important that eligibility is determined **early** so that student(s) can begin receiving benefits right away.

- With Federal School Meals Benefits students may have one breakfast and one lunch daily which meet specific meal pattern requirements.
- The benefit does not apply when students purchase a la carte offerings or incomplete meals which do not meet the meal pattern requirements. Parents/guardians will be responsible for a la carte purchases not covered by the Federal Benefit program.
- If you qualify for 3SquaresVT or Reach Up, your children are automatically eligible for benefits. Please call our office to make sure your student is receiving benefits.

**If you have questions or need help filling out the application please contact: Kathy Alexander at 802-453-2333 ext 1004 or 425-3728(h) or 233-4439(c) or [kalexander@anesu.org](mailto:kalexander@anesu.org).**

Non-Discrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly. "In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (Voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

1. **DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD?** No. Complete the application to apply for free or reduced price meals. 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 your school's main office in an envelope marked Kathy Alexander.**
2. **WHO CAN GET FREE MEALS?** All children in households receiving benefits from **3SquaresVT or Reach-Up** can get free meals regardless of your income. Also, your children can get free meals if your household's gross income is within the free limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines.
3. **CAN FOSTER CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS?** Yes, foster children that 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.
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 or e-mail **Kathy Alexander (453-2333 ext. 1004 or [kalexander@anesu.org](mailto:kalexander@anesu.org))** to see if they qualify.
5. **WHO CAN GET REDUCED PRICE MEALS?** Your children can get breakfast and lunch **at no cost** if your household income is within the reduced price limits on the Federal Eligibility Income Chart, shown on this application.
6. **SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM 3SQUARESVT THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE APPROVED FOR FREE MEALS?** Please read the letter you got carefully and follow the instructions. To ensure your children receive meal benefits immediately, please send the letter to the school. Call the Free and Reduced Meals coordinator, Kathy Alexander at **453-2333 ext 1004** 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 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.
8. **I GET WIC. CAN MY CHILD(REN) GET FREE MEALS?** Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced price meals. Please fill out an 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 and 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 or writing to: **David Adams at 453-3657.**
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 \$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.
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.
17. **MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR?** To find out how to apply for **3SquaresVT** or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call **1-800-479-6151**.