



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Tennessee Announces 2008-09 School Meal Guidelines

(NASHVILLE, Tenn.) - The Tennessee Department of Education today announced the 2008-09 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy for free and reduced price meals for children in Tennessee's schools. The USDA's school meals programs help ensure all students have access to a nutritious diet.

"Research indicates that eating habits affect student performance and health," said Acting Education Commissioner Tim Webb. "Simply stated, children who are hungry have difficulty learning. In today's fast-paced world, school meals offer your children a simple, affordable solution for a nutritious breakfast and a nutritious lunch."

Below are the federal income eligibility guidelines for July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009.

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
<b>48 CONTIGUOUS STATES, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, GUAM, AND TERRITORIES</b>											
1	10,400	19,240	1,604	802	740	370	13,520	1,127	564	520	260
2	14,000	25,900	2,159	1,080	997	499	18,200	1,517	759	700	350
3	17,600	32,560	2,714	1,357	1,253	627	22,880	1,907	954	880	440
4	21,200	39,220	3,269	1,635	1,509	755	27,560	2,297	1,149	1,060	530
5	24,800	45,880	3,824	1,912	1,765	883	32,240	2,687	1,344	1,240	620
6	28,400	52,540	4,379	2,190	2,021	1,011	36,920	3,077	1,539	1,420	710
7	32,000	59,200	4,934	2,467	2,277	1,139	41,600	3,467	1,734	1,600	800
8	35,600	65,860	5,489	2,745	2,534	1,267	46,280	3,857	1,929	1,780	890
For each additional family member, add	3,600	6,660	555	278	257	129	4,680	390	195	180	90

### Basic facts about free and reduced price meals:

**Do you need to fill out an application for each of your children?** No, you only need one application for each household.

**Do you need to fill out an application if your children are receiving food stamps or Families First?** No. If your household receives assistance under the Food Stamp Program or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF), your children will be notified of their eligibility and they will be provided free benefits unless you notify the school that you choose to decline benefits. You should only submit an application if you are not notified of your eligibility by a specified date determined by the school.

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**Who can get free meals?** (1) Children whose families get food stamps or TANF and most foster children regardless of income; and, (2) Children whose household income is within the free limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines are eligible.

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**Can homeless, runaway and migrant children get free meals?** If your children have not been informed that they will get free meals, you must call your school's homeless liaison or migrant coordinator.

**Can children enrolled in a school's Head Start/Even Start Program get free meals?** If your children meet this criteria and you have not been informed that they will get free meals, you must call your School Nutrition Program supervisor.

**Who can get reduced meals?** Children from families whose total household income is within the reduced price limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines Chart can get low cost meals.

**Should you fill out an application if you get a letter this school year saying your children are approved for free or reduced price meals?** Read the letter carefully and follow the instructions, or call your local School Nutrition Program supervisor.

**If you get WIC, can your children get free meals?** Your children may be eligible for free or reduced price meals, but you will need to fill out an application.

**Will the information you give be checked?** Yes, you may be asked to send written proof.

**If you do not qualify now, may you apply later?** Yes. You may apply at any time during the school year if your household size goes up, income goes down, or if you start getting Food Stamps, TANF, or other benefits. If you lose your job, your children may be able to get free or reduced price meals.

**What if you disagree with the school's decision once your paperwork is processed and your eligibility is determined?** You should talk to school officials, or you may also ask for a hearing by calling or writing the school officials.

**May you apply if someone in your household is not a U. S. citizen?** Yes. You or your children do not have to be U. S. citizens to qualify for free or reduced price meals.

**Who should you include as members of your household?** You must include all people living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends). You must include yourself and all children who live with you.

**What if your income is not always the same?** You must list the amount that you normally get. If you normally get overtime, include it. But if you do not normally get it, do not include it.

**If you are in the military, do you include your housing allowance as income?** If your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, do not include your housing allowance as income. All other allowances must be included in your gross income.

**How will your children be treated if they receive free or reduced meal benefits?** Children receiving free or reduced price meals are treated the same as children who pay for their meals. In accordance with Federal law and U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) 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 to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 800-795-3272 or 202-720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Do you need to fill out an application for each of your children?** No, you only need one application for each household.

**Will your children have their school fees waived?** If you are eligible and/or participating in the lunch program as a free or reduced price student, your school fees may be waived.

For more information contact Rachel Woods at 615-253-1960 or [Rachel.Woods@state.tn.us](mailto:Rachel.Woods@state.tn.us).

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