



# FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

## “Frequently Asked Questions”

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### Who can get free meals?

- Children attending a school participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) are eligible for free meals.
- Children who have been direct certified by the state are eligible for free meals.
- All children in households receiving benefits from SNAP or TANF 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 living in households with gross income that is within the free limits on the Federal Income Guidelines are eligible for free meals.



### What is the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?

A new program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that provides free breakfasts and lunches for all students at eligible schools regardless of family income.

### Which schools are participating in the CEP program for the 2020-2021 school year?

Bannerman Learning Center  
Charles E. Bennett Elementary  
Clay Hill Elementary  
Coppergate Elementary  
Doctors Inlet Elementary  
Grove Park Elementary  
Keystone Heights Elementary  
Keystone Heights High  
Lakeside Elementary  
McRae Elementary

Middleburg Elementary  
Montclair Elementary  
Orange Park Junior High  
Orange Park High  
Ridgeview Elementary  
S. Bryan Jennings Elementary  
Swimming Pen Creek Elementary  
W.E. Cherry Elementary  
Wilkinson Elementary  
Wilkinson Junior High

### **How were schools selected that are participating in the CEP program?**

The schools were selected based on the percentage of students at the school who are participating in one or more of a variety of public assistance programs, such as Head Start, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.



### **Do I need to fill out a Free & Reduced Application if my child attends a school participating in CEP?**

No. You do not need to fill out a Free and Reduced Application for your child that is attending a CEP school.

### **If I have children attending non CEP schools in Clay County do I need to fill out a Free & Reduced Application?**

Yes, You need to fill out an application for any children that are not attending a CEP school.

### **If my child transfers from a school participating in the CEP program to a non CEP school are they still free?**

No. You will need to fill out a Free and Reduced Application.

### **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.



### **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 price meals.

### **Who can get reduced meals?**

- Children who have been directly certified by the state are eligible for reduced meals.
- Children living in households with gross income that is within the reduced price limits on the Federal Eligibility Chart are eligible for reduced meals.

### **Why is the USDA establishing a new meal pattern and dietary specification for the National School Lunch Program?**

President Obama signed Public Law 111-296, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) to update school meal nutrition standards. This historic legislation marked the most comprehensive changes to the school nutrition environment in more than a generation. These changes hope to help fight childhood obesity as well as childhood hunger.

### **How will the HFFKA change what is offered in our school cafeterias?**

- Students must take at least ½ cup fruit or vegetable for the meal to be considered reimbursable
- Only fat free flavored and or 1% milk will be offered
- All grains offered are whole grain rich
- Less sodium
- More fresh fruits and vegetables
- Larger servings of fruits & vegetables
- Calorie targets vary depending on age/grade groupings
- Ala carte items must meet the “Smart Snacks in School” nutrition standards

### **Why does the school cafeteria no longer offer Ala Carte baskets?**



The new “Smart Snacks in School” rules set limits on calories, fat, sugar, and sodium while encouraging the consumption of whole grains, dairy, protein, fruits and vegetables. The Food & Nutrition Services Department works hard to ensure that all ala carte items meet these guidelines.

### **Payments?**

Students are allowed to go into the negative if they forget their lunch money. It is free to set up an account with “MySchoolBucks,” an on-line service. You may receive low balance notifications, set-up automatic payments and view transactions/payments made to the account. There is a service fee for on-line payments. Cash/check payments can be made at the school at no charge. “MySchoolBucks” also offers a mobile app for your convenience.

### **What kind of restrictions can I place on my child’s account?**

You may either contact Food & Nutrition Services or your school cafeteria to place restrictions on the account. We can add serving line notes such as “ala carte on Friday only”. We can also limit the amount spent each day.

### **What if my child has a food allergy?**

If your child has special diet needs/allergies, you may visit the FNS website to obtain nutrient information of each menu item by clicking on each item on the menu. Allergen information as well as access to carbohydrate reports are provided on the interactive menus. Please note ingredients and menu items are subject to change without notice. If your child has a specific food allergy you may contact Food & Nutrition Services and speak to our Registered Dietitian.



### **The cafeteria staff often tells my child to pick up a fruit or vegetable for the meal to be considered “reimbursable”. Why?**

In order for a meal to be considered “reimbursable” a student’s tray must contain a certain number of components-bread, fruit, vegetable, milk, meat/meal alternate. If a cashier encourages a child to pick

up an extra item it means he/she is missing a component to make the meal reimbursable (if not reimbursable it may cause the meal to cost more).

**Can a free and reduced application be filled out on line?**

Yes, applications can be completed in the convenience of your own home. This process is safe, secure and confidential. On-line applications are transferred electronically to the FNS office. Eligibility is determined within 1 to 2 business days. If you have not received your eligibility notification in the mail, you may call the FNS office to check the status.

**Do I need to fill out a Free and Reduced Application for each child?**

No. Use only one “Free and Reduced Application” for all students in your household. If you are applying for a foster child, check the box on the application to indicate this.

**Why do I not qualify for free lunch when my income is less than the amount on the back of the application?**

The income chart on the back of the application reflects the maximum amount of income a household can make to qualify for free or reduced lunch.

**Who should I include as members of my household?**

You must include all people living in your household, related or not.



**How do I show my income if I only work 9 or 10 months?**

You may project your annual income. The prior year’s income may be used if it provides an accurate reflection of the household’s current annual income.

**Will the information I give be checked?**

Yes, you may be asked to send written proof of your income or eligibility for Food Stamps or TANF at any time during the school year.

**If I do not qualify now, may I apply later?**

You may apply at any time during the school year if your household goes up in size or income goes down or if you start getting Food Stamps or TANF.

**If I transfer from another District will my status carry over?**

No. You will need to complete a new application for Clay County.

**Will I be reimbursed for charges that were made against my account before the application was approved?**

No. Money will need to be provided until notification of the approved status.

**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 received carefully and follow the instructions. Call the Food and Nutrition Services Office at (904)336-6856 if you have questions.

**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 complete a new application unless you have received a letter saying your child is eligible for the new year.

**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 Privatized Initiative, do not include your housing allowance as income. For the purpose of determining household size, deployed service members are considered a part of the household. Families should include the names of the deployed service members on their application. Report only that portion of the deployed service member's income made available to them or on their behalf to the family. If combat pay is received, in addition to basic pay, because of deployment and it was not received before deployment, combat pay is not counted as income.



**If you have questions or need help, please call  
(904)336-6856**