FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2026-2027

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. The Merton Community School District offers healthy meals every school day. Lunch costs **$3.50 (K-Grade 4)** and **$3.75/$4.20 (Grade 5-8)**. Your children may qualify for free meals or for reduced price meals. The reduced price is **$0.40** for lunch. This packet includes an application for free or reduced price meal benefits, and a set of detailed instructions. Below are some common questions and answers to help you with the application process.

1. Who can get free OR REDUCED PRICE meals?
    - All children in households receiving benefits from FoodShare, the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or W-2 cash benefits are eligible for free meals, when listed on the application.
    - Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals.
    - Children participating in their school's Head Start program are eligible for free meals.
    - Children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free meals.
    - Children may qualify to receive free or reduced price meals if your household's income is at or below the limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines.

FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART For School Year 2026-27			
Household size	Yearly ($)	Monthly ($)	Weekly ($)
1	29,526	2,461	568
2	40,034	3,337	770
3	50,542	4,212	972
4	61,050	5,088	1,175
5	71,558	5,964	1,377
6	82,066	6,839	1,579
7	92,574	7,715	1,781
8	103,082	8,591	1,983
Each additional person:	10,508	876	203

2. HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILDREN QUALIFY AS HOMELESS, MIGRANT, OR RUNAWAY? Do the members of your household lack a permanent address? Are you staying together in a shelter, hotel, or other 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 have not been told your children will get free meals, please call or e-mail **Travis Gardner, 262-538-2227, gardner@merton.k12.wi.us.**

3. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD? No. *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: Merton Community School District **Attn: Katie Lehfeldt, PO BOX 15, Merton, WI 53056**.

4. SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE ALREADY APPROVED FOR FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS? Please read the letter you received carefully and

follow the instructions. If your letter indicates you qualify for free meals, then no application is needed. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, contact **Katie Lehfeldt, 262-538-2801, lehfeldtk@merton.k12.wi.us** immediately. If your household was notified it qualified for reduced price meals, we encourage you to complete an application to potentially qualify for free meals based on household size and income.

5. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF MY CHILD ATTENDS A COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION (CEP) SCHOOL? If your child attends a school that participates in CEP, receipt of free breakfast and lunch meals does not depend on returning this application. However, this information is necessary for other programs and may be used to determine if your household is eligible for additional benefits.

6. CAN I APPLY ONLINE? Yes! You are encouraged to complete an online application instead of a paper application if you are able. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper application.
   Visit **https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/program-requirements/free-reduced-meal-eligibility/applications** to begin or to learn more about the online application process.

7. 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, through **September 18, 2026,** or when a new eligibility is determined. You must submit a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for the new school year. If you do not submit a new application that is approved by the school or you have not been notified that your child is eligible for free meals, your child will be charged the full price for meals.

8. I GET WIC. CAN MY CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS? Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced price meals, but it is based on income. Please submit an application.

9. MY CHILD PARTICIPATES IN BADGERCARE PLUS OR MEDICAID. CAN MY CHILD GET FREE MEALS? Children participating in Badgercare Plus or Medicaid may be eligible for free or reduced price meals, but it is based on income. Please submit an application

10. WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED? Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report.

11. 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 or experience a financial hardship may become eligible for free and reduced price meals if the household income drops below the income limit.

12. 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 **Dr. Ron Russ, PO BOX 15, Merton, WI 53056, 262-538-2227, russr@merton.k12.wi.us.**

13. 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.

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. 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 will assume you meant to do so.

16. 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, it must also be included as income. However, if your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, do not include your housing allowance as income. Do not include any combat pay resulting from deployment as income.

17. WHAT IF THERE IS NOT ENOUGH SPACE ON THE APPLICATION FOR MY FAMILY? List any additional household members on a separate piece of paper and attach it to your application.

18. MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR? To find out how to apply for FoodShare or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call 1-800-362-3002.

19. IF THIS APPLICATION IS APPROVED WILL MY CHILD RECEIVE SUMMER EBT BENEFITS? Yes. An approved Household Application for Free or Reduced Priced Meals qualifies your household for Summer EBT benefits. More information is available at https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/programs/SummerEBT.

If you have other questions or need help, call **262-538-2801 or email Katie Lehfeldt - lehfeldtk@merton.k12.us**.

Sincerely,

Merton Community School District