



WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. Westwood Public Schools offers healthy meals every school day at no cost to all students. We receive funding for this through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Lunch and breakfast at no cost for all of our students is now permanent. We need your help to keep providing free meals to all students in future years.

Completing the meal benefit application can:

- help sustain free meals for our school(s) by increasing access to Federal funding
- drive funding for educational programs in our community
- help provide free summer meals to all kids, and free meals to kids in childcare in our community.

Families who qualify for free or reduced-price meals for their children can also be qualified for Summer EBT starting in the summer of 2025. Summer EBT provides extra money for groceries during the summer months when kids aren't in school. Your participation can help your family and your community. The information you provide is confidential. We follow strict federal rules to keep your information private.

If you are not receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and have been approved for free or reduced-price school meals, you may be eligible for SNAP which provides monthly financial assistance to purchase groceries to Massachusetts residents who qualify. Find out if you are eligible for SNAP today by calling **Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline** at 1-800-645-8333 and a counselor can help you apply over the phone. You can also apply on your own online at DTA Connect: <https://dtacconnect.eohhs.mass.gov/apply>

Frequently Asked Questions

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: **[name, address, phone number]**.

SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE ALREADY APPROVED FOR FREE MEALS?

No, but please read the letter you got carefully and follow the instructions. If any children in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, contact **Westwood Food Service, 781-326-7500 x 4350** or email: food@westwood.k12.ma.us immediately.

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. You must send in a new application unless the school told you that your child is eligible for the new school year.

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 QUALIFIES FOR FREE OR REDUCED-PRICE MEALS?

All students in our schools will get free breakfast and lunch at school. But only some students qualify as "eligible" for free meals. These are:

- All children in households receiving benefits from **MA SNAP, MA TAFDC, FDPIR, or specific categories of Medicaid** 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 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 receive free or reduced price meals if your household's income is within the limits of the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Your children may qualify for free or reduced price meals if your household income falls at or below the limits on this chart.

FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART For School Year 2024 - 2025			
Household size	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$19,578	\$1,632	\$377
2	\$26,572	\$2,215	\$511
3	\$33,566	\$2,798	\$646
4	\$40,560	\$3,380	\$780
5	\$47,554	\$3,963	\$915
6	\$54,548	\$4,546	\$1,049
7	\$61,542	\$5,129	\$1,184
8	\$68,536	\$5,712	\$1,318
Each additional person:	\$6,994	\$583	\$135

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 haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call or e-mail **Westwood Public Schools, FSD 781-326-7500 x 1301** or email: **food@westwood.k12.ma.us**, **Student Services 781-326-7500 x 1345** or email: **smaselli@westwood.k12.ma.us**.

I GET WIC. CAN MY CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS?

Children in households participating in WIC may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Please send in a completed application.

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 www.westwood.k12.ma.us, click on **food service** to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact **Michael DiMascio, FSD 781-326-7500 x 4350** or email: food@westwood.k12.ma.us if you have any **questions about the online application**.

WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED?

Yes. We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report.

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.

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: **Michael DiMascio, FSD 220**

Nahatan Street, Westwood, MA 02090 781-326-7500 x 4350 or food@westwood.k12.ma.us.

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.

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.

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, or receive Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance payments, 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. Any additional combat pay resulting from deployment is also excluded from income.

WHAT IF THERE ISN'T 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. Contact **Michael DiMascio, FSD 781-326-7500 x 4350 or email: food@westwood.k12.ma.us to receive a second application.**

MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP. ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR?

To find out how to apply for **MA SNAP** or other assistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call **the MA DTA Assistance Line at 1-877-382-2363 (press 7 to apply for SNAP).**

If you have other questions or need help, call 781-326-7500 x 4350

Sincerely,

Michael DiMascio, FSD

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act requires the information on this application. You do not have to give the information, but if you do not submit all needed information, we cannot approve your child for free or reduced-price meals. You must include the last four digits of the social security number of the primary wage earner or other adult household member who signs the application. The social security number is not required when you apply on behalf of a foster child or you list a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) case number or other FDPIR identifier for your child or when you indicate that the adult household member signing the application does not have a social security number. We will use your information to determine if your child is eligible for free or reduced-price meals, and for administration and enforcement of the lunch and breakfast programs.

We may share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits for their programs, auditors for program reviews, and law enforcement officials to help them look into violations of program rules.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



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Dear Parent/Guardian:

Prior to initiating the hearing procedure, the parents or local school official may request a conference to provide an opportunity for the parent and school official to discuss the situation, present information and obtain an explanation of data submitted in the application or the decision rendered. The request for a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing.

Each LEA is required to develop their own official hearing procedure that is inclusive of all listed below.

The hearing procedure provides for the following:

1. A publicly announced, simple method for making an oral or written request.
2. An opportunity to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person.
3. An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, any documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal.
4. Reasonable promptness and convenience in scheduling a hearing and adequate notice as to the time and place of the hearing.
5. An opportunity to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting a position without undue interference.
6. An opportunity to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses.
7. That the hearing is conducted and the decision made by a hearing official who did not participate in making the decision under appeal or any previously held conference regarding the meal benefit issuance process.
8. That the decision of the hearing official be based in the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and be made a part of the hearing record.
9. That the parties concerned and any designated representative thereof be notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official and that the decision of the hearing official is binding.
10. That for each hearing a written record be prepared, including the challenge or decision under appeal, any documentary evidence, a summary of any oral testimony presented at the hearing, the decision of the hearing official including the reasons thereof and a copy of the notification to the parties concerned of the hearing official's decision.
11. That such written record be preserved for a period of 3 years after the close of the school year to which it pertains. These records shall be available for examination by the parties concerned or their representatives at any reasonable time and place during such period.

During the appeal and hearing procedure:

- A. Children who have been denied benefits upon application shall not receive continued benefits during this period.
- B. Children who have been approved for benefits but are subject to termination or reduction of benefits later in the same school year shall continue to receive benefits if an appeal of adverse action has been made within the 10-day advance notice period.

Advance notification shall be provided to families who receive a termination of benefits 10 calendar days prior to the actual termination. The notice shall advise households of: (1) the change; (2) the reason for the change; (3) the right to appeal the action within the 10-day advance notice period; (4) instructions on how to appeal and (5) the right to reapply any time during the school year. The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file at the Local Educational Agency.

Any change in benefit status will not impact access to lunch and breakfast at no cost. All students in the district can access lunch and breakfast at no cost regardless of their individual eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.

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