

Frequently Asked Questions



Q: During the enrollment process I was told my children are categorized as free/reduced price meals. Why am I being asked to complete a free and reduced priced meals application?

A: The enrollment process does NOT extend the free or reduced price meal benefit to students. The information submitted at the Family Resource Center is only for enrollment and student placement purposes. Unless the Food and Nutrition Department informs you otherwise, you MUST complete a free and reduced price meals application to determine if your family is eligible for the meal benefit. Applications are available online at the Food Services webpage or can be mailed to you upon request.

Q: My children qualify for free meals. Why do I get a letter saying their account is overdrawn?

A: There are a few reasons why a student's account would be overdrawn.

- 1. Your child is not actively qualified to receive free meals. Only the Food & Nutrition Department can verify if your child is receiving a meal benefit. Please contact the Food & Nutrition Department immediately to ensure your child is receiving the appropriate benefit to minimize charges to their school meal account.*
- 2. Your child is making A la Carte purchases. Free meal benefits only work if the student selects a FULL meal. This means if your child only wants a singular item (like a juice or milk) they will be charged for the value of that item. This often happens for families that qualify for free meals but occasionally send a student to school with a meal packed from home and assume they can just grab a drink to accompany their meal.*
- 3. Your child purchased meals BEFORE a complete meal application was submitted. If we don't have active documentation that your child is eligible for meal benefits they will be charged at the full price rate.*

Q: My kids got free meals last year, do I need to fill out an application this year?

A: YES. Our office needs a new active application on file each school year to prevent a lapse in meal benefits. We extend the meal benefit of the prior year for 30 days to allow families time to submit a new application. The only exception are for those families that receive a letter from the Food Service Department stating their child is directly certified for free meals for this year.

Q: If I forget to give my student lunch money will they go hungry in the cafeteria?

A: No. We feed any student in Pre-K through 8th grade that comes to our kitchens, regardless of the funds in their school meal account. Most families keep a positive balance in their student's school meal account, but in the instance the account becomes overdrawn we'll mail you a notification.



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Q: I forgot to send my meal application this year and now money is owed on my child's meal account. Should I still submit a meal application?

A: Yes. The sooner your application is processed the sooner we could possibly extend meal benefits to your student(s). It's important to note meal benefits are NOT retroactive. So even if you eventually qualify for free meals the money charged to the account prior will still be owed.

Q: Why is juice and chocolate milk served in the cafeteria?

A: There has been debate in the media reporting that chocolate milk and juice are considered "unhealthy" for children. The Wellness Policy Committee hosted by the Cambridge Public Health Department has met over the past year with this issue as the main topic of conversation. There have been multiple conflicting scientific studies that indicate both sides of the argument are correlated with varying outcomes. Given the interest in this topic we're providing more information on both sides of the debate within our website found [here](#). We want to give you the choice to decide for your family. If you would like to restrict your student's access to these offerings, please call the Food & Nutrition Services Office.