**FREE AND REDUCED MEAL (FARM)**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Why Am I Being Asked to Complete a Free and Reduced Meal (FARM) Application?**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been tasked with ensuring “that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious and balanced meals”. The National School Lunch Program (NSLP), or Free and Reduced Meals (FARM) program, has existed since 1946, and is one of several USDA sponsored programs that work toward that goal. The program provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. Your application will ensure you receive benefits for which you are eligible, and will help the USDA achieve its goal.

**Should I Submit an Application If I Do Not Believe I Am Eligible for Free and Reduced Meal Benefits?**

Tracy Unified School District and your student’s school are asking **every family** in Tracy Unified School District (TUSD) to complete an application for free/reduced price school meals. Even if your student does not intend to take advantage of the lunch program, every qualified application is counted towards bringing significant federal (Title I) and state (Local Control Funding Formula) funding to our schools. Your school will benefit financially with each application submitted prior to September 16th, 2016, whether or not your student is eligible for free or reduced meal services.

**Who Can Get Free OR Reduced Price Meals?**

1. All children in households receiving benefits from CA SNAP or CA TANF are eligible for free meals.
2. Foster children who are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals.
3. Children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free meals.
4. Children may receive free or reduced price meals if your household’s income is within the limits on 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.

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| FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART for School Year 2016-2017  |
| Household size  | **Yearly**  | **Monthly**  | **Weekly**  |
| 1  | **$21,978**  | **$1,832**  | **$ 423**  |
| 2  | **$29,637**  | **$2,470**  | **$ 570**  |
| 3  | **$37,296**  | **$3,108**  | **$ 718**  |
| 4  | **$44,955**  | **$3,747**  | **$ 865**  |
| 5  | **$52,614**  | **$4,385**  | **$1,012**  |
| 6  | **$60,273**  | **$5,023**  | **$1,160**  |
| 7  | **$67,951**  | **$5,663**  | **$1,307**  |
| 8  | **$75,647**  | **$6,304**  | **$1,455**  |
| Each additional person:  | **$+7,696**  | **$ +642**  | **$ +148**  |

**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 these children are eligible for free meals.

**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.

**Do I Have To INCLUDE Every Member Of My Household On The Application?**

Yes. You must include everyone who lives in the home.

**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 for each new school year.

**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 an application.

**If I Don’t Qualify Now, May I Apply Later?**

Tracy Unified School District is asking that every family submit an application, whether you believe you are eligible or not. If it is determined you are not currently eligible you may re-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.

**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.

**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.

**I Have A Question About Filling Out Areas Of My Application, Who Do I Contact?**Please contact the Food Service office at (209) 830-3256.

**How Long Does It Take To Receive My Eligibility Status?**The school district has 10 working days to process your application.  By using the online application, it will reduce the amount of time it takes to review and process your application significantly.

**How Will I Be Informed Of The Status Of My Application?**

Once your application is processed you will receive a confirmation letter in the mail.