School Meals Letter to Households

Aquinas Catholic School

PO Box 149

David City, NE 68632

7/21/26

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. Aquinas Catholic Schools offers healthy meals every school day. Lunch costs $4.25 at ACE and $4.50 at AQHS. Your children may qualify for free or reduced-price meals. In accordance with the Nebraska Hunger-Free Schools Act, reduced price breakfast and lunch are $0 for school year 2026-2027. If your child(ren) qualified for free or reduced price meals at the end of last school year, you must submit a new application by September 24, 2026 to avoid an interruption in meal benefits.

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 the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are eligible for free meals.
- Foster children who 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 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.

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 haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call or e-mail [school, homeless liaison or migrant coordinator].

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: Amanda Helgoth, PO Box 149 David City, NE 68632 or turn the form into the office of the school you attend and it will get to Amanda to be processed.

4. 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 Amanda Helgoth at Aquinas High School or Amanda-helgoth@cdolinc.net

5. Can I apply online?

You are encouraged to complete an online application instead of a paper application if your school district makes this option available. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper application. Visit Aquinas.com to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact Amanda Helgoth at 402-367-3175 or Amanda-helgoth@cdolinc.netif you have any questions about the online application.

6. 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. If you do not send in 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.

7. 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.

8. Will the information I give be checked?

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

9. 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.

10. 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: Fr. Jonathan Haschke, PO Box 149, David City NE 68632, 402-367-3175 or fr.jonathan-haschke@cdolic.net

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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. Any additional combat pay resulting from deployment is also excluded from income.

15. 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 amandahelgoth@cdolinc.net or on Aquinas website to receive a second application.

16. My family needs more help. Are there other programs we might apply for?

To find out how to apply for SNAP or other assistance benefits, please go online to ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov or call 1-800-383-4278.

If you have other questions or need help, call Amanda Helgoth @ 402-367-3175

Sincerely,

Amanda Helgoth, Lunch Coordinator for Aquinas Catholic.

Instructions for Completing the Free & Reduced-Price School Meals Family Application

For households receiving benefits from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

- Part 1: List each child's name, the school they attend, and their grade.
- Part 2: Enter the household's Master Case Number if the household qualifies for SNAP, TANF or FDPIR.
- Part 3: Skip Part 3.
- Part 4: Complete Part 4. An adult must sign the form.
- Part 5: Part 5 is optional and does not affect your children's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.

For households with foster, homeless, migrant or runaway children

If all children in the household are foster children:

- Part 1: List all foster children, the school they attend, and their grade. Check the box indicating the child is a foster child.
- Part 2: Skip Part 2.
- Part 3: Skip Part 3.
- Part 4: Complete Part 4. An adult must sign the form.
- Part 5: Part 5 is optional and does not affect your children's eligibility for free or reduced price meals. If you do not select race or ethnicity, one may be selected based on visual observation.

If some of the children in the household are foster children or are homeless, migrant or runaway children:

- Part 1: List all children, the school they attend, and their grade. Check the appropriate box.
- Part 2: If the household does not have a Master Case Number, skip Part 2.
- Part 3: Follow the following instructions to report total household income from the previous month.
    - Column 1: Household Members:
        - List the first and last name of each person living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends) who share income and expenses. Attach another sheet of paper if necessary.
    - Column 2: Gross Income and How Often it was Received:
        - Gross income is the amount earned before taxes and other deductions; it is not your take-home pay. For each household member, list each type of income received for the month. You must also report how often the money is received – weekly, every other week, twice a month, or monthly. Do not include income from SNAP, FDPIR, WIC, Federal education benefits and foster care payments. If you have no income, write "0" or leave the income field blank. By doing this, you are certifying there is no income to report.
        - <u>Earnings from Work includes the following:</u>
            - Salary, wages, cash bonuses

- Net income from self-employment (farm or business)
- If you are in the U.S. Military, include:
    - Basic pay and cash bonuses (do not include combat pay, Family Subsistence Supplemental
    - Allowance (FSSA) payments or privatized housing allowances)
    - Allowances for off-base housing, food and clothing
    -

- Public Assistance/Child Support/Alimony includes the following:
    - Unemployment benefits, Worker's compensation
    - Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Cash assistance from state or local government
    - Veteran's benefits (VA benefits), Strike benefits
    - Child support payments, Alimony payments

- Pensions/Retirement/All Other Income includes the following:
    - Social Security payments
    - Private pensions or Disability benefits
    - Regular income from trusts or estates, Annuities, Investment income, Earned interest, Rental income
    - Regular cash payments received from outside the household
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- Household Size:
    - Enter the total number of people in your household.

- Social Security Number:
    - The adult signing the form must list the last four digits of their Social Security Number (SSN) or check the box to the right labeled "Check if no SSN."

- Part 4: Complete this part. An adult must sign the form.
- Part 5: This part is optional and does not affect your children's eligibility for free or reduced price meals. If you do not select race or ethnicity, one may be selected based on visual observation.

Please note: Children who meet the definition of homeless, migrant or runaway, are eligible for free meals. However, the school district must have documentation on file from a migrant coordinator, homeless/runaway liaison, or the district's Direct Certification list to approve the child for free meals.

For ALL other households

- Part 1: List all children, the school they attend and their grade.
- Part 2: If the household does not have a Master Case Number, skip this part.
- Part 3: Follow these instructions to report total household income from last month.

    - Column 1 – Household Members:
        - List the first and last name of each person living in your household, related or not (such as grandparents, other relatives or friends) who share income and expenses. Attach another sheet of paper if necessary.

- Column 2 - Gross Income and How Often it was Received:
  - Gross income is the amount earned before taxes and other deductions; it is not your take-home pay. For each household member, list each type of income received for the month. You must also report how often the money is received – weekly, every other week, twice a month, or monthly. Do not include income from SNAP, FDPIR, WIC, Federal education benefits and foster care payments. If you have no income, write "0" or leave the income field blank. By doing this, you are certifying there is no income to report.

  - <u>Earnings from Work includes the following:</u>
    - Salary, wages, cash bonuses
    - Net income from self-employment (farm or business)
    - If you are in the U.S. Military, include:
      - Basic pay and cash bonuses (do not include combat pay, Family Subsistence Supplemental
      - Allowance (FSSA) payments or privatized housing allowances)
      - Allowances for off-base housing, food and clothing
  - <u>Public Assistance/Child Support/Alimony includes the following:</u>
    - Unemployment benefits, Worker's compensation
    - Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Cash assistance from state or local government
    - Veteran's benefits (VA benefits), Strike benefits
    - Child support payments, Alimony payments
  - <u>Pensions/Retirement/All Other Income includes the following:</u>
    - Social Security payments (including railroad retirement and black lung benefits)
    - Private pensions or Disability benefits
    - Regular income from trusts or estates, Annuities, Investment income, Earned interest, Rental income
    - Regular cash payments received from outside the household.

- Household Size:
  - Enter the total number of people in your household.

- Social Security Number:
  - The adult signing the form must list the last four digits of their Social Security Number (SSN) or check the box to the right labeled "Check if no SSN."

- Part 4: Complete this part. An adult must sign the form.
- Part 5: This part is optional and does not affect your children's eligibility for free or reduced price meals. If you do not select race or ethnicity, one may be selected based on visual observation.