Amity Middle School Bethany

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Free and Reduced-price School Meals for Districts Participating in the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) for School Year 2021-22

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Good news! For school year 2021-22, the **Amity Regional School District No. 5** has opted to participate in the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the National School Lunch Program. This means that all students enrolled in the **Amity Middle School Bethany** will receive lunch free of charge. However, it remains critical that you complete and submit your free and reduced-price meal application to **Amity Middle School Bethany** in order to determine eligibility for other programs, like the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT), discounted technology and WiFi programs, and more. This packet includes an application for free and reduced-price school meals and detailed instructions in how to complete it.

Note: Children receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) or Medicaid (HUSKY A) benefits *may* be directly certified and automatically eligible for free meals without applying for benefits. (Some children who receive Medicaid (HUSKY A) benefits **may** also be directly certified and automatically eligible for *reduced-price* meals.) Questions regarding SNAP/TFA/Medicaid and direct certification should be sent to the determining official, **Kathleen Kovalik at 203-397-4801 or kathleen.kovalik@amityregion5.org.**

If you have received a NOTICE OF DIRECT CERTIFICATION for free or reduced-price meals, **do not** complete the application unless instructed to do so by the district. Let the school know if any children in your household are **not** listed on the **Notice of Direct Certification** letter you received, since free or reduced meal benefits are extended to all children in a household when directly certified.

Additionally, all school-aged students in income-eligible households and students who are determined to be directly certified for free or reduced-price meals, can receive school meal benefits regardless of a student's immigration status and the district/school does not release information for immigration-related purposes in the usual course of operating the Child Nutrition Programs.

The **Amity Middle School Bethany** complies with the federal requirements for meal modifications for students with special dietary needs. The requirements for meal modifications are different for students with and without disabilities. For more information, please contact the food service director, **Peter Ferrara** at **203-397-4853**.

The answers to the common questions below can help you with the application process.

1. **Who can get free or reduced-price meals**?
   - All students residing in households where any member of the household receives SNAP or TFA benefits are eligible for free school meals. Note: *Some* students receiving Medicaid (HUSKY A) benefits are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.
   - Foster children that are under the **legal** responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals. (Note: A foster child is categorically eligible for free meals and may be included as a member of the foster family if the foster family chooses to also apply for benefits for other children. Including children in foster care as members of the household may help other children in the household qualify for benefits. If non-foster children in a foster family are not eligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits, an eligible foster child will still receive free benefits.)
   - Students participating in their school's Head Start program are eligible for free meals.
   - Students who are designated as homeless or runaway are eligible for free meals.
   - Students may receive free or reduced-price meals if your household's income is at or below 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:

Reduced Federal Eligibility Income Chart (Effective 7/1/2021 to 6/30/2022)			
Household size	**Yearly**	**Monthly**	**Weekly**
1	23,828	1,986	459
2	32,227	2,686	620
3	40,626	3,386	782
4	49,025	4,086	943
5	57,424	4,786	1,105
6	65,823	5,486	1,266
7	74,222	6,186	1,428
8	82,621	6,886	1,589
Each additional family member	+ 8,399	+ 700	+ 162

2. **How do I know if my children qualify as homeless 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 you have not been told your children will get free school meals, please call **Thomas Brant at 203-397-4821 or email him at** thomas.brant@amityregion5.org**.**

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 **Amity Regional School District No. 5, District Offices, Attention: Kathleen Kovalik, 25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525. Phone: (203) 397-4801. Email: kathleen.kovalik@amityregion5.org.**

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?** No, but please read the letter carefully and follow the instructions. If any students in your household were missing from your eligibility notification, contact **Amity Regional School District No. 5, District Offices, Attention: Kathleen Kovalik, 25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525. Phone: (203) 397-4801. Email: kathleen.kovalik@amityregion5.org** immediately.

5. **Can I apply online?** Yes. You are encouraged to complete the electronic online application for free and reduced-price school meals instead of a paper application when possible. The online application has the same requirements as the paper application and will ask you for the same information. Visit **www.amityregion5.org** to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact **Amity Regional School District No. 5, District Offices, Attention: Kathleen Kovalik, 25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525. Phone: (203) 397-4801. Email: kathleen.kovalik@amityregion5.org** if 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 up to 30 operating days into the new school year (or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first). When the carryover period ends, unless you are notified that your children are directly certified or you submit an application that is approved, your children's meals must be claimed at the paid rate. Though encouraged to do so, the LEA is not required to send a reminder or a notice of expired eligibility. Even if your school is offering meals at no cost, it is important that you

submit an application to ensure that in the subsequent school year, your child will remain eligible for free or reduced-price meals for up to 30 operating days.

7. **If I get Special Supplemental Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC) benefits, can my children get free meals?** Students 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 **Amity Regional School District No. 5, District Offices, Attention: Theresa Lumas, 25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525. Phone: (203) 397-4813. Email: terry.lumas@amityregion5.org.**

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 school meals.

12. **What if my income is not always the same?** List the amount that you **normally** receive. For example, if you normally make $1,000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only made $900, put down that you made $1,000 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. When this happens, please write "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, or receive Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance payments,

these 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 to your application. Contact **Amity Regional School District No. 5, District Offices, Attention: Kathleen Kovalik, 25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, CT 06525. Phone: (203) 397-4801. Email: kathleen.kovalik@amityregion5.org** to receive a second application.

15. **My family needs more help. Are there other programs we might apply for?** To find out how to apply for SNAP benefits and to contact the Department of Social Services office in your town, contact United Way's free referral number **2-1-1** (free call, statewide).

If you have other questions or need help, call **203-397-4801**.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Kovalik
Assistant Director of Finance and Administration

Nondiscrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly.

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: How to File a Complaint, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter 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;
(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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