

Meal Benefit Application Process

Amanda Chisholm

Khalia Smith

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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION



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- (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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Overview

- ★ General Requirements/Program Authority
- ★ Policy Statements
- ★ Public Outreach Requirements

- ★ The Application Packet
- ★ Determining Eligibility
- ★ Processing Applications



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School Meals Programs

General Requirements

- ★ All schools participating in NSLP or SBP must make free and reduced price meals available to eligible children

- ★ All schools participating in the free milk option of the SMP must make free milk available to eligible children.



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Program Authority

7 CFR Part...

- ★ 210 National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- ★ 215 Special Milk Program (SMP)
- ★ 220 School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- ★ 225 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
- ★ 226 Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- ★ 245 Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk in Schools



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Policy Statements

- ★ Permanent Policy for Determining Eligibility for Free & Reduced Price Meals - an assurance that all meals served to children will be done in a manner that ensures all children have equal access to the Child Nutrition Programs
- ★ Free & Reduced Price Policy - annual update



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Permanent Policy

What is the SFA agreeing to?

- ★ **Serve meals FREE or REDUCED to those qualifying**
- ★ No overt identification
- ★ No segregation, discrimination
- ★ Access DC list prior to start of school year
- ★ **Follow eligibility procedures**
- ★ Provide hearing procedures
- ★ Comply with verification requirements
- ★ Collection procedures/point of service



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Free & Reduced Price Policy

Annual Update

- ★ Determining, Confirming & Hearing Officials
 - ★ Hearing official **must not** be associated with the approval or verification processes; must be in an administrative position & not work directly in School Nutrition Services
- ★ Effective date of eligibility determinations
- ★ CEP, Universal Breakfast, Provision 2



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Effective Date of Eligibility

Submission or Approval Date

- ★ The LEA may choose to establish the date of application submission, rather than date of approval (SP 11-2014).
 - ★ Date stamp, repayment of meals or debt forgiveness
- ★ Claims are submitted normally and follow State agency procedures for adjusting claims after initial submission.
 - ★ SFAs can not make "Meal Eligibility Change" in the point of sale and alter all previous meal counts.



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Public Outreach Requirements

- ★ Public Media Release
- ★ Information Letters to Households
 - ★ Must be distributed to households of children attending the school
 - ★ Postal service, e-mail to parent/guardian, or information packet provided to students
- ★ Information Letters for Late Enrollments



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Information Letters

- ★ Frequently Asked Questions
 - ★ Reduced income guidelines (packet only)
 - ★ Fill in name of school
 - ★ Meal prices
 - ★ Contact information

- ★ Instructions on How to Apply
 - ★ Include contact, mailing addresses & where to direct questions

- ★ Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals



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Additional Documents

Application-related materials

- ★ Sharing Information with Medicaid/CHIP

- ★ Sharing Information with Other Programs

- ★ USDA's "I SPEAK Statements"



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Translated Applications

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/translated-applications>

- ★ [Chinese \(Simplified\)](#)
- ★ [Chinese \(Traditional\)](#)
- ★ [Farsi](#)
- ★ [French](#)
- ★ [French Creole](#)
- ★ [Gujarati](#)
- ★ [Haitian Creole](#)
- ★ [Hindi](#)
- ★ [Hmong](#)
- ★ [Ilokano](#)
- ★ [Italian](#)
- ★ [Jamaican Creole](#)
- ★ [Japanese](#)
- ★ [Korean](#)
- ★ [Portuguese](#)
- ★ [Russian](#)
- ★ [Samoan](#)
- ★ [Spanish](#)
- ★ [Tagalog](#)

Updated 8/19/2016

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Household Application

- ★ SFAs must provide household applications to families applying for free and reduced price meals or free milk benefits, unless the household has been directly certified.
- ★ SFAs are not required to provide applications to parents when children are directly certified.
- ★ If the SFA only provides applications to students NOT directly certified, then the SFA must assure these children are not overtly identified through the method used to distribute applications.

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Household Application

- ★ Paper
- ★ Electronic
- ★ Scanned
- ★ Computer/Web-based



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Household Application

- ★ Use the Massachusetts Application whenever possible.
- ★ Any proposed alternate meal benefit application must be submitted to ESE's Office for Food and Nutrition Programs for review and approval.
 - ★ Online, scanned and paper versions
 - ★ Nutrition@doe.mass.edu - "Application Approval" in subject
 - ★ Must be in approvable state and allow up to 4 weeks for review
 - ★ Maintain ESE approval for review
- ★ Outdated and unapproved applications may result in fiscal disallowance.








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Application Packet

Download packets/documents
ESE Document & Reference Library

▼ NSLP 2018 Meal Benefit Issuance Application

	SY 2017-2018 Massachusetts New Meal Benefit Household Application Packet
	SY 2017-2018 Income Eligibility Guidelines
	SY 2018 Household Application for Free and Reduced Meals
	SY 2017-2018 Household Application Instructions
	New 2017 Eligibility Manual for School Meals 7/2017

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The Application

Households apply based on...

- ★ Income & Household Size
- ★ Assistance Program
 - ★ SNAP, TANF
- ★ Other Source Categorical Eligibility
 - ★ Foster, Homeless, Migrant, Runaway

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Determining Eligibility

Carryover of Previous Year's Eligibility

- ★ LEAs must carryover all student's approved eligibility from the last operating day of the previous school year.
- ★ Approval may be used for up to 30 operating days from the first day of school.
- ★ Applies to all categorical eligibility determinations and income based applications.
- ★ Schools must process applications as they are received and promptly notify households of their eligibility status.



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Determining Eligibility

Determining Household Composition

- ★ Application approvals are based on an economic unit.
- ★ Economic unit is defined as a group of related or unrelated individuals who are living as one economic unit, and whose members share housing, significant income, and expenses.



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Household Composition

Special Conditions

- ★ An adopted child for whom a household has accepted legal responsibility is considered to be a member of that household.
- ★ A child who is temporarily away at school (college, boarding school) is a household member.
- ★ A child living with a relative (with no welfare agency or court legally responsible) is a household member.



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Special Conditions

- ★ Joint custody- if both parents apply for benefits, the greater benefit is issued.
- ★ Emancipated Child- living alone or as a separate economic unit is a household of one.
- ★ Foreign exchange student- is considered a member of the household in which the student resides (host).



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Household Composition

Applications with Foster and Non-Foster

- ★ Households with foster and non-foster children may choose to include the foster child as a household member, as well as any personal income earned by the foster child, on the same household application that includes their non-foster children.
- ★ The foster child will be certified for free meals, and non-foster children will be determined based on household size and income.



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Determining Household Income

Reporting Current Income

- ★ Current income is defined as gross income received by the household for the current month, or the amount projected for the month the application is filled out, or for the month prior to application.
- ★ Gross income must be reported.
 - ★ Self-employment can report net income.
- ★ Seasonal workers may project an annual rate.



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Processing Applications

Determining Complete Applications

- ★ Only complete applications can be processed. Any application missing required information, contains inconsistent information, or is unclear is considered an incomplete application and may not be processed.
- ★ Reasonable efforts should be made to contact the household to obtain or clarify information.
 - ★ If information is taken over the phone, document the information with the date and initial (SSN, income frequency).



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Complete Applications

Income-based Applications

- ★ Names of ALL household members
- ★ Amount, source & frequency of current income for ALL household members
- ★ Signature of an adult household member
- ★ Last four digit of Social Security Number
 - ★ Indication of no SSN



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Indication of 'No Income'

- ★ Applications must still request that applicants write a zero when there is no income to report but will no longer require a separate indication of no income.
- ★ Applications with blank income fields are to be processed by the school district as complete, rather than incomplete as in prior practice.
- ★ If local officials have information that the household has intentionally misreported its income, they must verify any such application for cause (SP 34-2016).



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Complete Applications

Assistance Programs (SNAP, TANF)

- ★ Names of all children for whom the application is made.
- ★ SNAP or TANF case number (Agency ID) for the children or any household member.
- ★ Signature of adult completing the application.

Determining officials must ensure that the Assistance Program's case number is consistent with the format used. If the case number seems incorrect, contact should be made to the household or verify the application for cause.



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Complete Applications

Other Source Categorical (Foster, Homeless, Migrant, Runaway)

- ★ Names of all children for whom the application is made.
- ★ Indication of child's categorical eligibility status.
- ★ Signature of adult completing the application.

- ★ Homeless families identified by the district liaison should not complete an application.
- ★ Districts often realize a family is homeless when they self declare through the application process.



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Processing Applications

2017-2018 Massachusetts Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals



If you have received a **Notice of Direct Certification** from the school district for free meals, **do not** complete this application. But **do** let the school know if any children in the household are not listed on the **Notice of Direct Certification** letter you received.

•**Direct Certification:** No application needed

•**Extended Eligibility:** means that all children in the household are categorically eligible for free meals if any child in the household is directly certified.



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STEP 1 List ALL Household Members who are infants, children, and students up to and including grade 12 (if more spaces are required for additional names, attach another sheet of paper)

Definition of Household Member: "Anyone who is living with you and shares income and expenses, even if not related." Children in Foster care and children who meet the definition of Homeless, Migrant or Runaway are eligible for free meals. Read How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals for more information.

Child's First Name	MI	Child's Last Name	School Name	Student? Circle YES or NO	Foster	Homeless	Migrant	Runaway
					Check all that apply			
				Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				Y N	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

STEP 1:

- ★ List the names of children in household: infant-grade 12.
- ★ CHECK IF A FOSTER CHILD: Foster children are categorically eligible for free status: no application needed. May include them in household size.
- ★ CHECK IF HOMELESS, MIGRANT, RUNAWAY



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Agency ID Number: _____

STEP 2 Do any Household Members (including you) currently participate in one or more of the following assistance programs: SNAP, TANF, or FDIPIR?

Write the Agency ID Number, then go to STEP 4 (Do not complete STEP 3) Do not provide EBT card number. Agency ID Number: _____

STEP 2:

- ★ If an LEA receives an application listing a SNAP or TANF number for any member of the household, then all children in the household are categorically eligible for free meals
- ★ Agency ID Number: 7-9 digits
(NOT: 60004323345) DO NOT PROVIDE EBT CARD NUMBER!
- ★ LEAs are encouraged to review the direct certification list to determine whether any of the applications with agency ID numbers can be matched with children on the direct certification list.
- ★ If a match is found, the application should be disregarded and categorical eligibility must be applied to all children within the household.



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STEP 3 Report Income for ALL Household Members (Skip this step if you answered "Yes" to STEP 2)

Review the charts titled "Sources of Income" for more information. The "Sources of Income for Children" chart will help you with the Child Income section. The "Sources of Income for Adults" chart will help you with the All Adult Household Members section.

A. Child Income
 Sometimes children in the household earn or receive income. Please include the TOTAL income received by all Household Members listed in STEP 2 here:

B. All Adult Household Members (including yourself)
 List all Household Members not listed in STEP 2 (including yourself) even if they do not receive income. For each Household Member listed, if they do receive income, report total gross income (before taxes) for each source in whole dollars (no cents) only, if they do not receive income from any source, write '0'. If you enter '0' or leave any fields blank, you are certifying (promising) that there is no income to report.

Name of Adult Household Members (First and Last)	Earnings from work			Public Assistance / Child Support / Alimony			Pensions / Retirement / All Other Income		
	Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month

Total Household Members (Children and Adults) Last Four Digits of Social Security Number (SSN) of Primary Wage Earner or Other Adult Household Member XXX-XX- Check if no SSN

STEP 3:

- ★ List total of **CHILDREN'S** income and how often (if applicable)
- ★ List all **ADULT** household members (even if no income)
- ★ Report whole dollars only for income - use standard rounding rules (<.50) (>.50)
- ★ Report 0 income for no income (if applicable)
- ★ You must tell how often for income: fill in circle for weekly, bi-weekly, etc.
- ★ Record total number of household members (children and adults)
- ★ Record last four digits of social security number or check if no SSN is available



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STEP 4 Contact Information and Adult Signature Mail Completed Form To: INSERT YOUR SCHOOL/DISTRICT MAILING ADDRESS HERE

"I certify (promise) that all information on this application is true and that all income is reported. I understand that this information is given in connection with the receipt of Federal funds, and that school officials may verify (check) the information. I am aware that if I purposely give false information, my children may lose meal benefits, and I may be prosecuted under applicable State and Federal laws."

Street Address (if available) Apt # City State Zip Daytime Phone and Email (optional)

Printed name of adult signing the form Signature of adult Today's date Error prone

STEP 4:

- ★ An adult household member must sign the application and record date
- ★ **ERROR PRONE:** Note there is a check box for the district to indicate if the application is error prone (for use during verification)



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INSTRUCTIONS		Sources of Income		
Sources of Income for Children		Sources of Income for Adults		
Sources of Child Income - Earnings from work - Social Security - Disability Payments - Survivor's benefits - Income from person outside the household - Income from any other source	Example(s) - A child has a regular full or part-time job where they earn a salary or wages - A child is blind or disabled and receives Social Security benefits - A Parent is disabled, retired, or deceased, and their child receives social security benefits - A friend or extended family member regularly gives a child spending money - A child receives regular income from a private pension fund, annuity, or trust	Earnings from Work - Salary, wages, cash bonuses - Net income from self-employment (farm or business) - If you are in the U.S. Military: - Basic pay and cash bonuses (BA/BC) - Incentive combat pay, PCSA or priviled housing allowances - Allowances for office housing, food and clothing	Public Assistance / Alimony / Child Support - Unemployment benefits - Worker's compensation - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) - Cash assistance from State or local government - Alimony payments - Child support payments - Veteran's benefits - Strike benefits	Pensions / Retirement / All Other Income - Social Security (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 from outside household
OPTIONAL Children's Racial and Ethnic Identities				
We are required to ask for information about your children's race and ethnicity. This information is important and helps to make sure we are fully serving our community. Responding to this section is optional and does not affect your children's eligibility for free or reduced price meals.		ethnicity (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic or latino		
		Race (check one or more): <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American		
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, 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 adult household member who signs the application. The last four digits of 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 FDRIR 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.		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 http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html , 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: mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 fax: (202) 850-7422, or email: program.intake@usda.gov This institution is an equal opportunity provider.		
For School Use Only				
2017-2018 Massachusetts Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals				
Total Income	Household Size	Annual Income Conversion:	Eligibility:	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Weekly x52 Every 2 Weeks x26 Twice A Month x24 Monthly x12	Free <input type="radio"/> Reduced <input type="radio"/> Direct <input type="radio"/>	
Only annualize income if there are multiple pay frequencies			Categorical Eligibility <input type="checkbox"/>	
How often?				
weekly <input type="radio"/> bi-weekly <input type="radio"/> 2x-monthly <input type="radio"/> monthly <input type="radio"/>				
Determining Official's Signature	Date	Confirming Official's Signature	Date	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	
Verifying Official's Signature	Date			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>			

Instructions for Sources of Income

- ★ Lists types of eligible sources of child income with examples of types that can be used in determining eligibility
- ★ Identifies types of eligible sources of income for adults with categories

Optional : Children's Racial and Ethnic Identities

- ★ The household does not have to complete this section but it must be on the application
- ★ Use of information statement & non-discrimination statement must be on the application



For School Use Only

This section must be completed by SFA

- ★ Record total income, household size, frequency of income, determined eligibility
- ★ Indicate if categorically eligible
- ★ All applications must be determined and benefits implemented within 10 working days of receipt of application by the determining official: refer to USDA memo SP 11-2014 for more details.
- ★ All applications must be edit checked, signed, and dated by the determining **and** confirming official



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Income Received

No Income Conversion Required

- ★ Only one source of income
- ★ All sources of income are the same frequency
- ★ Total all income and compare to the IEGs.



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Income Received

Income Conversion Required

- ★ Multiple income sources with more than one frequency
- ★ Must calculate annual income
 - ★ Weekly (x 52)
 - ★ Bi-weekly (x 26)
 - ★ Semi-monthly or twice per month (x 24)
 - ★ Monthly (x 12)



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Reviewing Applications

Application Processing Timeframe

- ★ Applications must be reviewed in a timely manner.
- ★ Within 10 operating days of receipt of application:
 - ★ An eligibility determination must be made (determined & confirmed)
 - ★ The family must be notified of its status
 - ★ The status must be implemented
- ★ The confirming official must edit check all determinations, sign and date (do not just sign the application)
- ★ POS system may be either the determining or confirming (not both)
 - ★ Check data entry for accuracy
 - ★ Application can be batch signed & dated



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Approved Applications

Household Notifications

- ★ Use the most current USDA prototype notification.
 - ★ Add most current to default notification settings in point of sale
 - ★ Most current notification located in Application Packet

- ★ Household must be notified.
 - ★ Letter method and or email
 - ★ Maintain templates for review



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Duration of Eligibility

- ★ Eligibility is yearlong.

- ★ Families are not required to submit new application if their income changes.

- ★ Families can reapply at any time throughout the school year that were denied or approved for reduced price meals and have a change in their income that will result in a greater benefit.

- ★ Temporary approval no longer exists.



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Transferring Eligibility

Within the Same LEA

- ★ Transferring from one school to another, the child's eligibility status must be transferred.
- ★ Transferring from Provision 2 school (non-base year) to non Provision 2 school, a new application is required.
- ★ If a child transfers within the same LEA from a school using CEP to a non-CEP school, a new application is required (or DC determination)



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Transferring Eligibility

Transferring to Another LEA

- ★ LEAs and schools are encouraged, but not required to share eligibility data with a new LEA when a child transfers
- ★ The new LEA may accept the eligibility determination from the former LEA.
- ★ If an application is provided, the accepting LEA should review the application for accuracy.
 - ★ If an error is found, the LEA must notify the household that it must file a new application in order to receive benefits.



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Transferring CEP

- ★ When a child in a CEP school transfers to another LEA, the new LEA may accept the eligibility determination from the child's former LEA only if eligibility was based on current direct certification or there is an application on file for other children in the household that do not attend a CEP school.



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Denied Applications

- ★ Applications must be denied if incomplete.
- ★ Must provide household notification.
 - ★ Written, email
- ★ Use the most current USDA prototype.
- ★ Notification must include:
 - ★ Reason for denial of benefits
 - ★ Right to appeal
 - ★ Instructions on how to appeal
 - ★ Information to re-apply at any time during the school year
- ★ A notice of denial is not required if the households fails to reapply during the carryover period.



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Notice of Adverse Action

- ★ All households for whom benefits are to be reduced or terminated must be given 10 calendar days' written advance notice of the change.
- ★ The first day of the advance notice period is the day the notice is sent.



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Appeals & Hearing Procedures

- ★ A household may appeal either the denial of benefits or the level of benefits for which it has been approved.
- ★ If a household appeals during the 10 calendar day advance notice, benefits must continue until a final determination is made.



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No Application Submitted

Households That Have Not Applied

- ★ Local school officials may complete an application for a child known to be eligible for meal benefits if the household has not applied.
- ★ When exercising this option, the school official must complete the application with household size and income information.
 - ★ Source of information must be noted on application
 - ★ Household notification is required to be sent.
 - ★ Intended for limited use



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Questions?



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