
	<p><b>ELIGIBILITY: NOTIFICATION OF FREE/REDUCED PRICED MEALS AND CERTIFICATION OF BENEFITS</b></p> <p>SY 2023-2024</p>
	<p>Presented by NYSED Office of Child Nutrition</p>

Welcome to the Eligibility webinar, hosted by the New York State Education Department Office of Child Nutrition. Presenting today is \_\_\_\_\_. Answering questions is \_\_\_\_\_.

*If you have any questions during the presentation, please type them into the question box. We will review them at the end.*

*Following today's presentation, you will receive an email containing the slides for today's webinar. If you do not receive them, please email [CNTraining@nysed.gov](mailto:CNTraining@nysed.gov)*

A copy of the webinar will also be posted and available on the CN website. As always, if you have any questions, please contact your Child Nutrition Program Representative or email [CN@nysed.gov](mailto:CN@nysed.gov).

## Acronyms

- School Food Authority (SFA)
- Recipient Agency (RA)
- Direct Certification Matching Process (DCMP)
- New York State Student Identification System (NYSSIS)
- SED Delegated Account System (SEDDAS)
- Community Eligibility Program (CEP)

Throughout today's discussion, there are acronyms that will be used. Since not everyone is familiar with terms used throughout the Child Nutrition Programs, we thought it would be a good idea to go through them before we get started.

SFA is the School Food Authority which is the governing body which is responsible for the administration of the Child Nutrition Programs. In most cases, this is the school district.

The school buildings within the SFA are to referred to as Recipient Agencies or RAs.

DCMP is direct certification matching process. The DCMP provides SFAs access to direct certification data, which includes SNAP and Medicaid lists, as well as direct certification data that has been matched to New York State student records through the New York State Student Identification System (NYSSIS). In order to access NYSSIS, users must have a username and password through SED Delegated Account System (SEDDAS).

We will be referring to Community Eligibility Provision as CEP.

# Today's Agenda

- Prototype Letters
- Determining Eligibility
  - ▣ Categorical
  - ▣ Income applications
- Benefit Issuance Document
- Record Retention

Today we will be reviewing:

- Prototype Letters
- Determining Eligibility- Categorical and Income applications
- Benefit Issuance Document
- Record Retention

All schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program must make free and reduced-price meals available to eligible children.

Also, schools that participate in the Special Milk Program who have chosen to participate in the free milk option must make free milk available to eligible children.

Student eligibility is the foundation for the claim for reimbursement, so it is important to ensure that eligibility determinations are made accurately, and each student is receiving the correct benefits at the point of service.

# Eligibility Tab

Access the **Eligibility Tab** for:

- Guidelines
- Determining Eligibility
- CEP and Provision 2 resources, templates letters and forms

Home Programs Farm to School **Eligibility**

## Eligibility

### Guidelines

- Income Eligibility Guidelines, Application, and Related Information
- Income Verification
- Student Eligibility Carryover in the 2022-2023 School Year

### Determining Eligibility

- Free & Reduced Application Guidance
- Direct Certification Matching Process (DCMP)
- Eligibility Manual for School Meals®
- Eligibility Guidance
- Eligibility Data
- Head Start®

### Special Provision Options

- Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)
- Provision 2 Guidance®

Prior to the start of each school year, SFAs should access the Eligibility tab found on the blue ribbon of the Child Nutrition Knowledge Center. This tab contains the information on the guidelines to be followed when establishing eligibility, resources used when determining eligibility and information on operating with a Special Provisions.

When SFAs are processing eligibility or conducting income verification, they should refer to the 2017 USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals. This manual provides comprehensive information on federal requirements, policies, and procedures, and is intended to help SFAs accurately determine, certify, and verify children's eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals.

In order to access the prototype documents, click on the Income Eligibility Guidelines, Application, and Related Information link, which we will discuss on the next slide.

The Special Provisions offered in NYS are Community eligibility Provision (CEP) and Provision 2. The Special Provision Options sections which contains CEP and Provision 2 resources, template letters and forms.

There is a comprehensive CEP webinar on our website, which can be accessed by clicking on the training tab. We highly suggest anyone interested in operating under CEP to watch the webinar. CN has a waiver from USDA allowing SFAs to submit CEP applications through **August 31<sup>st</sup>**, the application due date is usually June 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Income Eligibility Guidelines, Application, and Related Information

- Income Eligibility Guidelines
- Prototype Applications/Letters
- USDA translation Forms

### USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals

The USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals provides comprehensive information on the Federal requirements, policies, and procedures for establishing eligibility in the Child Nutrition Programs. This is intended to help School Food Authorities (SFAs) accurately determine, certify, and verify children's eligibility for free and reduced-price school meals and free milk.

### Income Eligibility Guidelines

SFAs must use the 2023-2024 School Year income eligibility guidelines to approve free and reduced-price income applications for school meals. These guidelines are family-size income levels prescribed annually by the Secretary of Agriculture for determining eligibility for free and reduced-price meals and free milk.

### NYSED Eligibility Prototype Documents

[Click here for a PDF printer-friendly version of all documents.](#)

Free and Reduced Price Income Application and Application Fact Sheet

English Word PDF

Other Language Applications

Public Announcement

Word PDF

Parent Letter

Word PDF

Special Milk Program Letter

Word PDF

Notification Letter for School Meals

Word PDF

Notification Letter for Directly Certified Students

Word PDF

Meal Services to Children with Disabilities

Word PDF

Consent to Release Eligibility Information

Word PDF

### Language Translations

Once the Income Eligibility Guidelines, Application, and Related Information link is clicked, the page includes the income eligibility guidelines for the 2023-2024 school year and the forms and guidance needed to process applications for free and reduced-price meals and/or milk. This information supersedes the previously issued New York State Education Department (NYSED) Policy Booklet.

The available prototypes include the Free-reduced Price application, public announcement, letters to send to families announcing the program and notification of eligibility and the consent to release information. Child Nutrition recommends the use of the provided prototype letters as they contain the required information and updated USDA non-discrimination statement.

There is also a link to USDA's translated applications, which features foreign language translations of the Prototype Application. These are provided by USDA as a template to SFAs serving households where English is not spoken as a primary language.

# Prototype Letters

## Public Announcement:

- Send to:
  - Newspapers
  - Unemployment office
  - Major employers contemplating layoffs
  
- Not required to pay for printing

ANNUAL NEWS RELEASE - PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

Local School Food Authority today announced a free and reduced price meal (Free Milk) policy for area school children. Local school officials have adopted the following family eligibility criteria to assist them in determining eligibility:

**2023-2024 INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS OR FREE MILK**

Household Size	Free Eligibility Scale					Reduced Price Eligibility Scale*					
	Annual	Monthly	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly	Annual	Monthly	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly	
1	\$ 18,954	\$ 1,580	\$ 790	\$ 729	\$ 365	1	\$ 26,973	\$ 2,248	\$ 1,124	\$ 1,038	\$ 519
2	\$ 25,626	\$ 2,137	\$ 1,069	\$ 986	\$ 493	2	\$ 36,482	\$ 3,041	\$ 1,521	\$ 1,404	\$ 702
3	\$ 32,318	\$ 2,694	\$ 1,347	\$ 1,243	\$ 622	3	\$ 45,991	\$ 3,833	\$ 1,917	\$ 1,769	\$ 885
4	\$ 39,000	\$ 3,250	\$ 1,625	\$ 1,500	\$ 750	4	\$ 55,500	\$ 4,625	\$ 2,313	\$ 2,135	\$ 1,068
5	\$ 45,682	\$ 3,807	\$ 1,904	\$ 1,757	\$ 879	5	\$ 65,009	\$ 5,418	\$ 2,709	\$ 2,501	\$ 1,251
6	\$ 52,364	\$ 4,364	\$ 2,182	\$ 2,014	\$ 1,007	6	\$ 74,518	\$ 6,210	\$ 3,105	\$ 2,857	\$ 1,429
7	\$ 59,046	\$ 4,921	\$ 2,461	\$ 2,271	\$ 1,136	7	\$ 84,027	\$ 7,003	\$ 3,502	\$ 3,232	\$ 1,616
8	\$ 65,728	\$ 5,478	\$ 2,739	\$ 2,528	\$ 1,264	8	\$ 93,536	\$ 7,795	\$ 3,898	\$ 3,568	\$ 1,784
Each Add'l Person, age 18 or over	\$ 6,682	\$ 557	\$ 279	\$ 257	\$ 129	Each Add'l Person, age 18 or over	\$ 9,509	\$ 792	\$ 397	\$ 366	\$ 183

\*Students in New York State that are approved for reduced price meals will receive breakfast and lunch meals and snacks served through the Afterschool Snack Program at no charge.

**SNAP/TANF/FDPIR Households:** Households that currently include children who receive the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) but who are not found during the Direct Certification Matching Process (DCMP), or households that currently receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) must complete an Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals (ARPM) using the child's name, a valid SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR case number and the signature of an adult household member. Eligibility for free meal benefits based on participation in SNAP, TANF or FDPIR is extended to all children in the household. When known to the School Food Authority, households will be notified of their children's eligibility for free meals based on their participation in the SNAP, TANF or the FDPIR programs. No application is necessary if the household was notified by the SFA their children have been directly certified. If the household is not sure if their children have been directly certified, the household should contact the school.

**Other Source Categorical Eligibility:** When known to the School Food Authority, households will be notified of any child's eligibility for free meals based on the individual child's designation as: Other Source Categorical Eligible, as defined by law. Children are determined Other Source Categorical Eligible if they are Homeless, Migrant, Runaway, a foster child, or Enrolled in Head Start or an eligible pre-kindergarten program.

Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court, are eligible for free meals. Any foster child in the household is eligible for free meals regardless of income. A separate application for a foster child is no longer necessary. Foster children may also 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 household members 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.

If children or households receive benefits under Assistance Programs or Other Source Categorical Eligible Programs and are not listed on the notice of eligibility and are not notified by the School Food Authority of their free meal benefits, the parent or guardian should contact the school or submit an income application.

**Other Households:** Households with income the same or below the amounts listed above for family size may be eligible for and are urged to apply for free and/or reduced-price meals (or free milk). They may do so by completing the Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals/Milk sent home with the letter to parents. One application for all children in the household should be submitted. Additional copies are available at the principal's office in each school.

Prior to the beginning of each school year, the public must be notified that free and reduced-price meals and/or free milk programs are available at your SFA .

All SFAs that participate in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, or Special Milk program must send the public announcement to local newspapers, local unemployment offices and to any major area employers that are contemplating large layoffs.

While you are required to send the public announcement, you are not required to pay to have it printed. Keep a copy of the announcement distributed along with a list of the locations that you distributed the announcement to.

SFAs cannot post the public announcement on the school website because it contains the free eligibility scale.

SFAs that operate the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2, there is a prototype public announcement available on our website for you to use.

# Prototype Letters

## Parent Letter:

- Distribute free and reduced-price income application to families
- Provides instructions for families
- Contains only reduced-price scale

Letter to Parents for School Meal Programs

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Children need healthy meals to learn. [Name of School] offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast costs [0], lunch costs [0]. Your children may qualify for free meals or for reduced price meals. Students in New York State that are approved for reduced price meals will receive breakfast and lunch meals and snacks served through the AfterSchool Snack Program at no charge. Below are common questions and answers to help you with the application process.

- DO I NEED TO FILL OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD?** No. Complete one Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals/Milk to apply for free or reduced price meals for all students in your household attending this School Food Authority. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so be sure to fill out all required information as indicated on the application and application instructions. Return the completed application to: [name, address, phone number].
- WHO CAN GET FREE MEALS?**
  - All children in households receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), are eligible for free meals. Categorical eligibility for free meal benefits is extended to all children in a household when the application lists an Assistance Program's case number for any household member.
  - Foster children that 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. Households with children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway or migrant should contact the SFA for assistance in receiving benefits.
  - Children may receive free meals if your household's gross income is within the free or reduced price limits on the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Students in New York State that are approved for reduced price meals will receive breakfast and lunch meals and snacks served through the AfterSchool Snack Program at no charge.
  - Your children may qualify for free or reduced price meals if your household income falls at or below the limits on this chart:

2023-2024 REDUCED PRICE INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES					
Total Household Size	Annual	Monthly	Twice per Month	Every Two Weeks	Weekly
1	\$26,213	\$2,184	\$1,124	\$1,038	\$519
2	\$36,482	\$3,041	\$1,621	\$1,494	\$747
3	\$45,961	\$3,833	\$2,071	\$1,789	\$898
4	\$55,500	\$4,625	\$2,513	\$2,138	\$1,069
5	\$65,099	\$5,418	\$2,709	\$2,501	\$1,251
6	\$74,818	\$6,210	\$3,105	\$2,867	\$1,434
7	\$84,597	\$7,002	\$3,502	\$3,232	\$1,616
8	\$93,536	\$7,795	\$3,898	\$3,598	\$1,799
*Each adult person, add	\$9,559	\$793	\$397	\$366	\$183
- CAN FOSTER CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS?** Yes, foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court, are eligible for free meals. Any foster child in the household is eligible for free meals regardless of income. Foster children may also 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 on household members 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.
- CAN HOMELESS, RUNAWAY, AND MIGRANT CHILDREN GET FREE MEALS?** Yes, children who meet the definition of homeless, runaway, or migrant qualify for free meals. If you haven't been told your children will get free meals, please call or email [school, homeless liaison or migrant coordinator information] to see if they qualify.
- SHOULD I FILL OUT AN APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN ARE APPROVED FOR FREE MEALS?** Please read the letter you got carefully and follow the instructions. Call the school at [phone number] if you have questions.
- MY CHILD'S APPLICATION WAS APPROVED LAST YEAR. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT ANOTHER ONE?** Yes. Your child's application is only good for that school year and carried over for the first 30 operating days of this school year (or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first). 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.

The parent letter is a document that must be distributed to all families within the SFA along with a copy of the free and reduced-price income application, unless the household has been directly certified. This letter provides instructions to families on completing the income application. If an SFA decides to use their own letter instead of the prototype, they must request approval from SED to ensure that all required components are included.

The parent letter is different from the public announcement because the parent letter can **ONLY** include the reduced-price income scale.

Please be aware that households who are enrolling new students at any time in the school year must be provided with the parent letter and free and reduced application form upon enrollment.

A copy of the parent letter that was distributed must be kept on file with other Program records for 3 years plus the current year.

For CEP and Provision 2 schools, we provide a template parent letter to use to notify the households that meals will be provided at no charge.

# Prototype Letters

## Notification Letter:

- Families must be informed approval/denial applications
- Denied program benefits must include explanation of hearing/appeals process
- Written notification must be retained on file

NOTIFICATION LETTER FOR SCHOOL MEALS

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Your application for free and reduced price meals for your child(ren) has been:

\_\_\_\_\_ Approved for free meals.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Approved for reduced price meals. Your child(ren) will receive breakfast and lunch meals at no charge.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Denied for the following reason(s):  
     \_\_\_\_\_ Income over the allowable amount.  
     \_\_\_\_\_ Incomplete application. The following information is missing:  
     \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

If you do not agree with the decision, you may discuss it with a school official and you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing the following official:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

You may reapply for benefits at any time during the school year. If you are not eligible now but have a decrease in household income or become unemployed, or have an increase in household size, you may fill out another application at that time.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name Title Date

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

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2800 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>. From any USDA office, by calling (866) 628-9897, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA, the letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 696-7442; or
3. email: [complaints@usda.gov](mailto:complaints@usda.gov)

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1

All households who submit applications must be informed of the approval or denial of their applications.

Written notification must be provided to each household denied program benefits in order to provide the household with the hearing and appeals process.

A copy of such written notification must be retained on file.

As mentioned previously, we strongly suggest SFAs use our prototype notification letter as it contains the correct information and updated USDA non-discrimination statement. This ensures letters sent out contain the correct and required information. Some common errors we see includes the letters in point-of-sale systems, are not updated or do not contain the correct information.



# Prototype Letters

## DCMP Notification Letter:

Must include:

- Students eligible for free benefits
- "No application is necessary"
- Explanation of extended eligibility
- Instructions notifying SFA of additional children in the household
- Instructions notifying SFA if directly certified children want to opt out

NOTIFICATION LETTER FOR DIRECTLY CERTIFIED STUDENTS

Dear Parent/Guardian: Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your child(ren) has been automatically approved for free meals and/or milk during the 2023-2024 school year. This approval is based on student/household eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and/or Medicaid. **ONLY RETURN THIS LETTER to your child(ren)'s school if you do not want the free school meal/milk benefits.**

Please **DO NOT** fill out an application for free or reduced price meals and/or milk for the following child(ren):

Student Name	School Name	Grade

If you have student(s) in your household that are not listed above, please contact this office at \_\_\_\_\_ Free meal benefits will be extended to all children residing in the same household.

If you **DO NOT** want your student to receive these school meal benefits, please check the box below, sign and return this letter.

I do not want free meals/milk benefits for my children listed above

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Non-discrimination Statement**

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who receive alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TAGSRT Center at (202) 725-3000 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at [www.aphis.usda.gov/indianaffairs/indianaffairs/indianaffairs/3027.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/indianaffairs/indianaffairs/indianaffairs/3027.pdf), from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-6296, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or
2. fax: (800) 255-1885 or (202) 896-7442; or
3. email: [program.intel@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:program.intel@aphis.usda.gov)

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SFAs must notify households regarding eligibility established through direct certification.

The direct certification matching notification letter must include: a statement showing the child is eligible for free benefits, explaining that no further application is necessary; extended eligibility and how to notify the SFA of any additional children in the household not listed on the notification; and how to notify the SFA if free benefits for directly certified children are not wanted.

The notification of a child’s eligibility through direct certification may be done through e-mail if the SFA has an e-mail address for a parent or guardian.

If a family declines benefits, the student’s status must be categorized as “paid” and the family would be required to pay for meals.

# Determining Eligibility

## Methods of Determining Eligibility

### Categorical Eligibility

- Direct Certification (DCMP)
  - ▣ SNAP, Medicaid, extensions found on direct matching
- Other Source Categorical
  - ▣ Migrant, runaway, homeless, foster, federal Head Start, through liaison/agency

### Income Applications

- Categorical Applications
  - ▣ SNAP, TANF, FDPIR case number, foster listed on application
- Income Applications:
  - ▣ Income determines free or reduced status

There are two methods of determining eligibility. The first method is Categorical eligibility which include Direct Certification and “Other Source” categorical eligible.

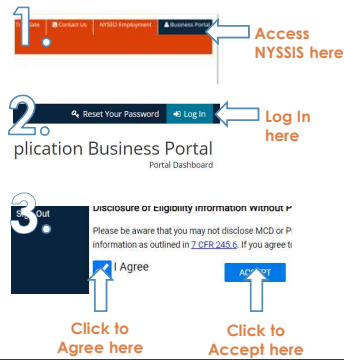
The second method is free and reduced-price income applications which include categorical applications and income applications. Categorical applications are reviewed based on SNAP, TANF, FDPIR case numbers or foster eligibility. Income Applications are approved based on household income and family size.

SFAs must track how students are deemed eligible for free or reduced-price meals, for example categorical (SNAP or Medi) or application.

# Categorical Eligibility

## DCMP

### Direct Certification



- Provides increased access free meals
- Additional accurate reporting
- Monthly SNAP and Medicaid data
- DCMP Tutorial found on training tab of website

Direct Certification provides increased access to free meals for children entitled to receive free meal benefits and allow for more accurate reporting, better policy and decision making at the local, State and federal levels.

The State Match feature provides users with access to direct certification data including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and certain thresholds for Medicaid matched to New York State student records through the New York State Student Identification System known as NYSSIS. The NYSSIS system is already in-use by school personnel responsible for assigning unique IDs to students.

Sed receives SNAP and certain Medicaid data monthly from State partners which is matched to the SFA's enrollment in NYSSIS.

Students must have a NYSSIS ID in order to conduct the state match. Students who do not have a NYSSIS ID can be searched using the roster upload feature where one student at a time or an entire roster can be uploaded to match to Direct Certification data.

You can access the direct certification data by clicking the "Business Portal" link on the Child Nutrition Knowledge Center website. This will take you to the NYSED Application Business Portal website. This is a site separate from the Child Nutrition Knowledge Center and requires another user id and password separate from the one you use for CNMS.

A Delegated Administrator in your district will have to create an account and grant entitlements for this application. If you do not know who the delegated administrator is in your district, please reach out to your Child Nutrition representative.

A tutorial is on the CN website navigating and matching students via the NYSSIS system is available on the Child Nutrition Knowledge Center under the Training tab

All public and nonpublic schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program are required to complete the DCMP.

SFAs using standard counting and claiming must conduct DCMP a minimum of three times a year:

Once as close to the beginning of the school year as possible;

Another by or near November 30

And the third by or near February 28.

SFAs implementing the CEP district-wide or Provision 2 must conduct the DCMP once annually.

## Extension of Free Meal Benefits

- All children in a household with at least one child or household member who receives benefits from an Assistance Program are eligible for free meals
- SFAs can use school enrollment records to validate the household address & maintain documentation on file

If one child in the household receives benefits through an assistance program all students living in the household are eligible for free school meals, regardless of whether the children are related.

To extend eligibility, the SFA may use school enrollment records to identify additional children that live in the same household as a child identified through the DCMP.

If a student has been identified as living in the same household as a student that has been directly certified, the SFA will need to keep the enrollment records on file and provide free meal benefits without further application.

The students who qualify as having extended eligibility are considered directly certified extensions for reporting purposes.

# Categorical Eligibility

## Other Source Categorical

**Migrant Students:** Identified by State or local Migrant Education Program (MEP) coordinator

**Runaway Students:** Identified by the local education liaison as receiving assistance through a program under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

**Homeless Students:** Homeless Liaison or homeless shelter may deem a student homeless (McKinney-Vento Act [www.nysteachs.org](http://www.nysteachs.org))

**Foster Child:** Care and placement is the responsibility of the State

**Head Start/Even Start:** Child enrolled in Federal Head Start/ Even Start Program

Other Source Categorical refers to those students certified for free meals certified through a liaison or agency. “Other source categorical eligibility” cannot extend to all the students living in the household. If your SFA receives an application from the family, you would certify the other students based on the information on the application.

The state or local Migrant education Program coordinator must confirm the child’s eligibility for Migrant Students.

Runaway students should be identified by the local education liaison when receiving assistance through a program under the runaway and homeless youth act.

Homeless students must be deemed eligible by the Homeless Liaison or by a homeless shelter. The website [www.nysteachs.org](http://www.nysteachs.org) identifies the homeless liaison for each public school district. Non-public schools should contact the liaison designated for their public district. These officials may provide you with a list of students. The list must be dated and signed by coordinator, liaison or provider – List is sufficient- no applications needed.

A foster child is a child whose care and placement is the responsibility of a State or local welfare agency or who is placed by a court with a caretaker household. This applies only to foster children who are formally placed by the State welfare agency or court. It does not apply to informal arrangements, such as caretaker arrangements or to permanent guardianship placements, which may exist outside of or as a result of State or court-based systems. A child may still be considered a foster child if placed with relatives provided the placement is made by the State or local foster care system or courts. The State must retain legal custody of the child --whether placed by a welfare agency or a court -- in order for a child to be considered categorically eligible for free meals.

Students attending a federally funded Head Start program are categorically eligible for free meals. However, any siblings of Head Start students ARE NOT categorically eligible because no extension of eligibility exists for these students.

# Application Eligibility

## Categorical Applications

1. List all children in your household who attend school:

Student Name	School	Grade/Teacher	Foster Child	Homeless Migrant, Runaway
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. SNAP/TANF/FDPIR Benefits:

If anyone in your household receives either SNAP, TANF or FDPIR benefits, list their name and CASE # here. **Skip to Part 4 and sign the application.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ CASE #: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Report all income for ALL Household Members (Skip this step if you completed step 2)

**Foster Child on application is categorically eligible for free meals**

1. List all children in your household who attend school:

Student Name	School	Grade/Teacher	Foster Child	Homeless Migrant, Runaway
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. SNAP/TANF/FDPIR Benefits:

If anyone in your household receives either SNAP, TANF or FDPIR benefits, list their name and CASE # here. **Skip to Part 4 and sign the application.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ CASE #: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Report all income for ALL Household Members (Skip this step if you completed step 2)

The SFA should never deny benefits for a family that has a valid SNAP case number on the application when it is not found electronically. These families are automatically eligible for free meal benefits.

SFAs should be familiar with what their local assistance program case numbers looks like. SFAs cannot accept the 16-digit number found on EBT cards or the 9-digit social security number in place of the assistance program case number.

Also, Medicaid numbers are not automatically eligible for free meals unless found on the Direct Certification Matching.

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 household members 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. This definition does not apply to informal arrangements or permanent guardianship placements that may exist outside of State or court-based systems

# Application Eligibility

## Income Applications

- Qualify based on the current income eligibility guidelines
- Take at face value
- Approved student(s) remains eligible for entire school year
- Families may apply throughout the school year
- Only complete applications may be approved

Date Withheld: \_\_\_\_\_ F R D \_\_\_\_\_

**2023-2024 Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals/Milk**

To apply for free and reduced price meals for your children, read the instructions on the back, complete **only one** form for your household, sign your name and return it to the address listed below. Call **[phone number]**, if you need help. Additional names may be listed on a separate paper.

Return Completed Applications to: (School Name)  
(Street Name)  
(City, State, Zip Code)

1. List all children in your household who attend school:

Student Name	School	Grade/Teacher	Foster Child	Homeless Migrant, Runaway
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. SNAP/TANF/FDPR Benefits: If anyone in your household receives either SNAP, TANF or FDPR benefits, list their name and CASE # here. Skip to Part 4 and sign the application.  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ CASE # \_\_\_\_\_

3. Report all income for ALL Household Members (Skip this step if you completed step 2)  
All Household Members (including yourself and all children that have income). List all Household Members not listed in Step 1 (including yourself) even if they do not receive income. For each Household Member listed, if they do receive income, report total income for each source in whole dollars only. If they do not receive income from any other 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 household member	Earnings from work before deductions Amount / How Often	Child Support, Alimony Amount / How Often	Pensions, Retirement Payments Amount / How Often	Other Income, Social Security Amount / How Often	No income
\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	\$ _____ / _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Total Household Members (Children and Adults)  \*Last Four Digits of Social Security Number: XXX-XX-\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ I do not have a SSN

\*When completing section 3, an adult household member must provide the last four digits of their Social Security Number (SSN) or mark the 'I do not have a SSN' before the application can be approved.

4. Signature: An adult household member must sign this application before it can be approved. I certify (promise) that all the information on this application is true and that all income is reported. I understand that the information is being given so the school will get federal funds. The school officials may verify the information and if I purposely give false information, I may be prosecuted under applicable State and Federal laws, and my children may lose meal benefits. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Ethnicity and Race are optional; reporting to this section does not affect your children's eligibility for free or reduced price meals.  
Ethnicity:  Hispanic or Latino  Not Hispanic or Latino  
Race (Check one or more):  American Indian or Alaskan Native  Asian  Black or African American  Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Island  White

**DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE - FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY**

Annual Income Conversion (Only convert when multiple income frequencies are reported on application)  
Weekly X 52, Every Two Weeks (bi-weekly) X 26, Twice Per Month X 24, Monthly X 12

SNAP/TANF/Foster  Income Household Total Household Income From Other  Income Household Size \_\_\_\_\_  
 Free Meals  Reduced Price Meals  Detailed Paid \_\_\_\_\_ Date: Notice Sent \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Reviewing Official \_\_\_\_\_

The free and reduced priced meal family application is used to provide meal benefits to students who qualify based on income.

Income Eligibility is a method to provide benefits to a child whose household qualifies based on the current year income eligibility guidelines set by USDA.

The reviewing official will review the income application to determine which level of benefits the child/children qualify for by using the income eligibility guidelines. The income eligibility guidelines are located under the Eligibility Guidelines in the Eligibility tab of the Child Nutrition Knowledge Center.

Every year, new income eligibility guidelines are released by USDA. The reviewing official must ensure they are using the most current guidelines each school year when approving applications

All applications must be taken at face value and once approved, the student would remain eligible for the entire school year even if the household income increases. Families can submit applications at any time during the school year or report a loss of income to qualify. If a household reappplies and is approved for greater benefits, the SFA does **not** have to ask the family for proof of income unless the family was selected for the income verification process.

Only complete applications can be approved for meal benefits. Applications missing required information must be denied if the missing information cannot be obtained by a phone call or email to the family. To be considered complete, an application must include the required information. The SFA should make reasonable efforts to contact the household to obtain or clarify required information. All contact with families regarding eligibility can and should be documented on the application.

A complete income application must provide:

- Names of all household members;
- Amount, source, and frequency of current income for each household member;
- Signature of an adult household member; and
- For income applications: Last four digits of the social security number of the adult who signed the application, or an indication that the household member does not have one.

## Determining Eligibility

### Eligibility Carryover:

- Prior year's eligibility may be carried over for the first 30 operating days of the new school year or until new eligibility is made
  - Operating days are days the school is in session
  - A new eligibility determination supersedes the carryover
- Applications must be processed within 10 operating days

Eligibility from the prior year must be used to determine eligibility for the first 30 operating days of the school year, or until a new eligibility determination is made in the current school year, whichever comes first

Carryover allows families time to submit an application while children can still be fed based on the previous year eligibility status. While not required to issue a notification about the carryover period, school officials are encouraged to clarify for families that the carryover will end after 30 operating days. School officials should inform affected families that they must submit a new application for meal benefits to re-establish their child's eligibility before the end of the carryover period.

Once a family submits an application, the new determination supersedes the carryover eligibility and must be implemented within 10 operating days of receipt.



# Determining Eligibility

## Flexibility for Effective Date

### Income Application

- Allows the date of submission of the application rather than the date of approval of the application

### DCMP

- Allows date a student was first identified as a direct match rather than the date the SFA access file.

## To use flexibility SFAs must:

- Notify their CN Representative
- Exercise the flexibility consistently:
  - for all eligibility methods
  - for all students in participating schools /programs
- Document the effective date used
- Refund any money paid for reimbursable meals prior to the eligibility determination

Children are eligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits on the date their eligibility is determined; however, flexibility exists to allow SFAs to move the effective date of eligibility to an earlier date under certain circumstances. This applies to both traditional household applications and direct certification.

SFAs may establish the date of submission of an application as the effective date of eligibility, rather than the date the official approves the application. This flexibility applies only to complete applications containing all required information at the time of submission.

When using this flexibility while conducting the Direct Certification Matching Process, SFAs may consider the effective date of eligibility for free school meals to be the date that first identified the student as a direct match as the effective date of eligibility, rather than the date the SFA accesses and processes the automated data matching file into their local point of service system. The effective date of eligibility is located on the column “DC Eligibility Date”.

If an SFA chooses to adopt the new flexibility policy, they must do the following:

1. Notify their Child Nutrition Program Representative of their intent to use this flexibility
2. Do so consistently for all eligibility methods
3. Exercise the flexibility for all students across the participating schools and programs
4. Document the effective date used, such as a date stamp, to document the date lists or letters from other agencies were received, or the documented and traceable run date of automated match files or recipient benefit files from another appropriate agency
5. Refund any money paid for a reimbursable meal or milk prior to the eligibility determination

# Benefit Issuance Document

- Master List of all eligible free and reduced-price students
- Must keep a current list of updates/changes
- Retain hard copy of master list at point of service


Sample Benefit Issuance Document

Last Name	First Name	Benefit Status	Method of Certification	Date of Certification	School Name	Selected for Verification
Smith	Bob	A	Application	8/20/2023	Fox Elementary	N
Jones	Aaron	B	Application	9/14/2023	Fox Middle School	Y
Day	Jenny	A	SNAP	8/20/2023	Fox Elementary	N
Williams	Mary	A	MEDI	8/20/2023	Fox High School	N

SFAs are required to maintain a benefit issuance document listing all students that are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The benefit issuance document may be maintained manually as a roster or may be updated electronically in a Point of Service System. It is extremely important that your benefit issuance document reflects accurate eligibility determinations. The Benefit Issuance Document is used to ensure students are receiving the benefits they were certified for and is used to report the number of students eligible by each of the different categories of eligibility, free, reduced price and paid.

Your benefit issuance document should indicate how each student was deemed eligible. The benefit issuance document should note the date the child was approved for the benefits. Student eligibility is confidential information and must be coded to prevent overt identification. SFAs should use codes to indicate free or reduced such as A & B or 1 & 2. When coding rosters, SFAs may not use the letters F or R for free/reduced.

Benefit issuance must be kept current. You must update the document when students leave or change category. The SFA should always have a hard copy of the benefit issuance document near the cash register so cashiers can refer to it during system failures, a building (RA) closure where students go to another building, or a natural disaster.



- All Child Nutrition documents:
  - Must be filed for 3 years plus the current school year
- Application documents contain private information
  - Keep in a secure location

All child nutrition documents must be kept on file for three years plus the current school year. Applications are confidential and should be kept in a secure area with limited access.

# Questions

- Child Nutrition Program Administration
- 518-473-8781
- [cn@nysed.gov](mailto:cn@nysed.gov)



We will now take questions on anything discussed during today's Eligibility webinar.

Again, please use the Q&A box in the lower corner to type and send it into our staff to which we will answer for all viewers to hear. Please remember you may always contact your CN representative for questions specific to your SFA or on other topics not discussed during today's webinar.