

# Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Applications

#### Webinar SY 2023-2024



BREAK for a PLATE ALABAMA

**Presented by: Loria Hunter** Education Specialist II ALSDE CNP School Programs

## Webinar Link

### • <u>CLICK HERE</u> for the WebEx recording



# BREAK for a PLATE SCHOOLS

Learning Codes

- 3200 Program Management
- 3000 Administration
- 3110 Free/Reduced Price Meal Benefits

# Agenda

Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Applications

#### L. Direct Certification

- 2. F/R applications
- 3. Eligibility Manual Overview
- 4. USDA Prototype Options
  - Paper Application
  - Web-based Application
- 5. Application Processing
- 6. Appeal Process
- 7. Recordkeeping
- 8. Independent Review
- 9. Training
- 10. Summer EBT

Correction: The public release must be sent to local media outlets, the unemployment office, and large employers experiencing layoffs.

## **Direct Certification (DC) Electronic Matching**

Direct Certification allows LEAs to establish student eligibility for free meals using participant data from other means-tested programs (ex. SNAP, TANF, MEDICAID) eliminating the need for an application.

Automated Data Matching is the most common direct certification method used. ALSDE provides the Direct Cert list to public and charter schools by automatic upload through PowerSchool. Private Schools and RCCIs with day students must certify students by matching enrolled students to the direct cert list provided on the online application at the web address below

cnp.alsde.edu

#### **NSLP >Forms >Direct Cert**



### **Direct Certification - Medicaid - Electronic Matching**

Children may ONLY be directly certified based on an automated data matching process between the Alabama State Department of Education and the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

#### **Extended Eligibility:**

Direct certifications of Medicaid Free or Reduced-Price determinations may be extended to other children in the same household.

Determination will be made at the state level and imported as part of the DC file nightly into PowerSchool.

# Direct Certification Other Source Categorically Eligible

- A process conducted through an automated data matching or an exchange of information between appropriate State or local agencies and officials such as the LEAs homeless/foster/runaway coordinator.
- DC may be conducted using lists of eligible children provided to the SA or LEA from appropriate officials. Letters from and contact with the officials may also be used as documentation for certification. [7 CFR 245.6(b)(2)]



Medicaid free and Medicaid reduced-price students are NOT considered categorically eligible since they must meet an income standard as a factor of eligibility. \*These students are only matched electronically.

## Direct Certification Other Source Categorically Eligible

Page 18 Eligibility Manual

- Federal Head Start
- State or Indian Tribal Pre-K Programs
- Homeless
- Migrant (Migrant Education Program)
- Runaway
- Foster

## Direct Certification - Other Source Categorically Eligible Migrant (Migrant Education Program)

#### My applications « (AIM) Services Portal (alsde.edu)

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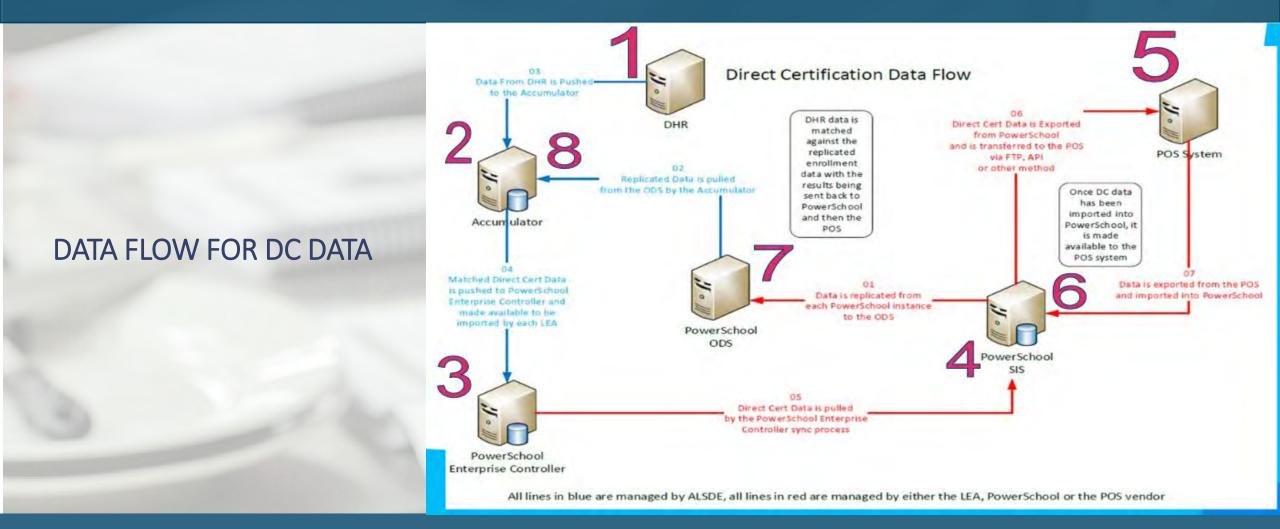
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#### DC STUDENTS - MATCHED VS UNMATCHED

- ALSDE RECEIVES NEW
   DC FILE ON JULY 1
- LEAS RECEIVES NEW DC FILE ON JULY 2 DURING THE NIGHTLY IMPORT
- LEAS SEE UPDATED STUDENT STATUS JULY 3 IN POWERSCHOOL

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App Home	Enrollment	Assessments	Career Tech	Child Nutrition	Federal Programs	Instruction
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#### Timing is Key!

ALSDE DC file imports into the state enterprise controller every morning around 10:00 AM CST

PowerSchool lunch sync occurs every hour from the state enterprise controller. ALSDE nightly replication begins around 7:00 PM at night sending Lunch data back to AIM

When is your district syncing from your POS back into PowerSchool? When are you moving data from PowerSchool into your POS? Ensure the timing for data movement by your technology department aligns for appropriate data integrity

#### What you should NOT be importing back into PowerSchool from your POS.

•Identified Population Field – determined by ALSDE DC file only.

•Any DC status – only students with a Paid, Reduced or Free status should be updated in PowerSchool by the POS vendor.

Any student that has a DC status with a blank identified population is an indication that your POS system is qualifying students as DC and writing them back to PowerSchool erroneously.

#### **Lunch Status**

- DC lunch status will have identified population that is listed in the DC matched file in AIM.
- •The LEAs should structure their export to their POS system to translate a parent declined to Full Paid
- •Change History can be used to track any changes made to the status. Use to help track down issues

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All Enrollments Digital Equity & Learning Preferences Functions STC		Lunch History			Submit

## Notification of Eligibility through Direct Certification

## **DC Letters**

- The notification must explain that the child is eligible for free benefits without further application.
- The notification must clarify eligibility that free meal benefits extend to all school-aged children in the household.
- Must inform households of how to notify the LEA of any additional school-aged children in the household not listed on the notification.
- Must explain how the household can notify the LEA if the household does not wish to receive benefits for directly certified children.

Duration of Eligibility and Carryover Eligibility

#### **DURATION OF ELIGIBILITY**

Once an eligibility determination is made, a child's free, reduced or paid meal status remains in effect for the entire school year and up to 30 operating days into the following school year.

If the household reapplies or becomes eligible through direct certification the eligibility may change.

#### **CARRYOVER ELIGIBILITY**

(SFA's responsibility to establish grace period dates in POS) The child's eligibility free, reduced or paid status from the previous school year is carried into the current school year for up to 30 operating days.

## **30-Day Carryover Benefits Prior to Processing Applications**

- Children with approved free or reduced price meal application on file from the previous year; Children directly certified for free or reduced meal benefits in the previous school year;
- Children who are newly enrolled in the LEA, but who reside in a household where another child (e.g., a sibling) has an approved application on file or was approved through direct certification with an Assistance Program in the previous year;
- Children determined Other Source Categorically Eligible for free benefits in the previous school year; and
- Children in kindergarten who were enrolled in Head Start under the jurisdiction of the same LEA during the previous school year.



## NO Application after 30-Day Carryover

- If no new application is submitted and eligibility is not established through direct certification by the end of the 30-day carryover period, a child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals expires, and the LEA must discontinue benefits.
- The household does not have a right to appeal a discontinuation of benefits due to the expiration of the carryover period because no eligibility determination was made during the current school year. (Eligibility Manual for Schools, page 54)

#### Please refer to page 54 Eligibility Manual.

Benefits for Students Transferring to a New School

The 30-Day carryover applies to:
1. Transfers within an LEA
2. Transfers between LEAs
3. Transfers from a CEP or Provision 2 school to a non-CEP/Provision 2 school.

This carryover ensures students do not experience a gap in school meal access.

# Reference

## **Eligibility Manual for School Meals Determining and Verifying** Eligibility July 18, 2017

Eligibility Manual for School Meals Determining and Verifying Eligibility

July 18, 2017

USDA Food and Nutrition Services

Child Nutrition Programs

Eligibility Manual for School Meals (azureedge.us)



SY24 will continue to use this version.

- Prototype Application for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals
- Prototype letter to households, *Frequently Asked Questions About Free and Reduced -Price School Meals*
- Prototype application instructions, *How to Apply for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals*
- Prototype information sharing authorizations; (<u>To ensure compliance use the letter posted on the ALSDE website.</u>)
  - Sharing Information with Medicaid/SCHIP
  - Sharing Information with Other Programs
- Prototype household benefit issuance notifications:
  - Notice to Direct Certification
  - Notice of Direct Certification Medicaid Reduced
  - Notice to Households of Approval/Denial of Benefits
- SY23-24 Income Eligibility Chart
- SY23-24 Public Release and Public Release Prototypes for CEP/Prov 2
- Prototype verification materials:
  - We Must Check Your Application
  - We Have Checked Your Application

NOTE: The USDA Non-Discrimination Statement is not required on FAQ if sent with all information in a packet. If documents are sent separately, the USDA Non-Discrimination Statement must be included on the Frequently Asked Questions for F/R Meal Applications and the How to Apply for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals.

#### **Prototype Application and Supporting Documents Link**

Child Nutrition Programs

School Nutrition Programs

**Regulations and Policies** 

Forms and Resources

The USDA Free and Reduced-Price Meals Prototype Application for SY 24 will be posted on the Alabama State Department of Education website.

STATE BOARD COMMUNICATION REPORTS & DATA DIVISIONS & OFFICES CONTACT

Child Nutrition Programs

Child Nutrition Staff h

community

CFP / SFSR

ALSDE Home Page : Alabama Achieves  $\rightarrow$  Community  $\rightarrow$  Child Nutrition Programs  $\rightarrow$  School Nutrition Programs  $\rightarrow$  Then, Scroll down to Free and Reduced Forms.

Home = Child Nutrition Program.

Assessment

Charter Schools

Virtual Schools

Homeschool

**Child Nutrition Programs** 

Human Resources

Community ~

#### FREE AND REDUCED FORMS **Fitle** Description SY 22-23 How To Apply For Free And Reduced Price SY 22-23 How To Apply For Free And Reduced Price School Meals School Meals SY 22-23 Prototype Household Application for Free and SY 22-23 Prototype Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals Reduced Price School Meals SY 22-23 Income Eligibility Chart SY 22-23 Income Eligibility Chart SY 22-23 Income Eligibility Chart SY 22-23 Household Letters Community ~ SY22-23 Public Release SY22-23 Public Release SY22-23 Free and Reduced Price School Meals SY22-23 Free and Reduced Price School Meals information information District Contact Information School Meals - Translated Applications School Meals – Translated Applications

## USDA Prototype Options

#### Paper or Scannable:

- The prototype may be used by State and local agencies as an example when designing a new application packet.
- Local LEA's will need to modify prototype application to be district specific

Web-Based:

- The electronic prototype application is intended to be a model for how State and local program operators (or their designated vendors) may develop an effective and fully compliant electronic/online application for school meal benefits.
- USDA offers both the design and code as open-source publications, structured to adapt and integrate with appropriate data management systems maintained at the state and/or local level. This open-source code offered by USDA at no cost.

State Approval Required for Customized Documents and Web-Based Applications Customized Household Application for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals

 Customized Letters for Application and Verification

Web-based Application Link

 The deadline for submitting these documents is June 23.

### **USDA Prototype Web-Based Application Requirements**

- Frequently Asked Questions About Free and Reduced-Price School Meals – Letter to Household
- For a web-based application, a paper copy should be available
- The letter to the household, must inform parents how to access the paper application.



https://www.fns.usda.gov/apps/school-meals/web-based-prototype/docs/index.html#/welcome

weicome!
This is the Applewood School District electronic application for free and educed priced meals for the <u>USDA</u> 's National School Lunch & School Breakfast Programs. This interactive application will guide you through the application process. When you are ready to apply, click the 'Get started' button below to begin. If you would like to apply using the <u>paper application</u> , you can print and complete it and then return it to us at 100 Main Street, Anytown, USA
Get started

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Ma

Children need healthy meals to learn. [Name of School/School District] offers healthy meals every school day. Breakfast costs [\$]; lunch costs [\$]. Your children may qualify for free meals or for reduced price meals. Reduced price is [\$] for breakfast and [\$] for lunch. You can access the electronic application for free and reduced priced meals for the USDA's National School Lunch & School Breakfast Programs by visiting [<u>https://www.districtlink</u>] The web-based application will guide you through the application process. If you would like to apply using the paper application, you can get one from your local school office or download and print one from the district website. Complete the application and then return it to us at [Name of School/School District].

Below are some common questions and answers to help you with the application process.

## Web-Based/Online Applications

The LEA is ultimately responsible for determining the eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, not the computer system.

The LEA must ensure the computer system meets all requirements and performs all functions with a high degree of accuracy, as outlined in the eligibility manual. (page 72)

Original date of approval

- Household size
- Household income
- Updates the status of the application to account for transfers, withdrawals, terminations and any other changes.

### Web-Based/Online Applications

- The determining official should sample a batch of applications to confirm that the software captures the required information.
- ALSDE recommends a batch of 5 applications. If an error is found, include documentation from the software company that the error has been corrected and confirm 5 additional applications.
- For documentation, the determining official may sign or initial the sample batch. Indicate name, title, and date.

### **USDA Prototype Application Paper and Web-Based**

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Print Name of Adult Signing the Form		Signature		p	One (upper )		

 The highlighted field on the top right has space for the online line application address, school/district name and address.

 Additionally, a field has been added to Step 4 in the application instructions where program operators should include the mailing address where households may send completed applications.

Frequently Asked Questions About F/R School Meals Only change the **[bold bracketed fields]** or highlighted sections with state/district/facility specific information.

#### Be sure to:

-Identify appropriate contacts (director, superintendent, homeless liaison, etc.)
-Include appropriate phone numbers and addresses.

-Font size must be legible.

#### The letters may be distributed by:

- -US Postal Service
- -E-mailed to the parent or guardian, or -Information packets provided to students.

#### **Common Mistake**

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

5. CAN I APPLY ONLINE? Yes! You are encouraged to complete an online application instead of a paper application if you are able. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper application. Visit [website] to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact [name, address, phone] number, e-mail if you have any questions about the online application.

If you select YES - The FAQs must explain that the option to submit a paper application is still available and must indicate how the household may obtain and submit a paper application.

 HOW DO I ENOW IF MY CHILDREN QUALIFY AS HOMELESS, MIGRANT, OR RUNAWAY? Do the members of your homebookt lack a nermanent address? Are you staving together in a thelier, hold, or other temporary HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILDREN QUALIFY AS HOMELESS, MIGRANT, OR RUNAWAY? Do the members of your household lack a permanent address? Are you raying together in a shahar, hotel, or other temporary housing arrangement? Does your family relocate on a seasonal basis? Are any children living with you who Myour household lack a permanent address? Are you staying forether in a sheller, hotel, or other temporary fouring arrangement? Deer your family relocate on a seasonal basis? Are any children living with you was have observe to sease their restor family or household? If you believe obsiders in your household meet these If Does your samily resocate on a seasonal basis? Are any children ityngs with you who a fact prior family or household? If you believe children in your household meet these and the seasonal basis? and of the mean please call or e-mail (school, homeless) OUT AN APPLICATION FOR EACH CHILD? No. Use one Free and Reduced Price School of the second se Trans Application FOR EACH CHILD? No. One one rise and Auduced Phice school indents in your Augustabilit. We cannot approve an application that is not complete, so guined information. Return the completed application to: [name, address, phone APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAYING MY CHILDREN on one ever weares the house way the lotter was not earthultr and failors the APPLICATION IF I RECEIVED A LETTER THIS SCHOOL YEAR SAVING MY CHILDREN ED FOR FREE MERLEY. No, but please read the letter you got barshily and shlow the en in your household were missing from your eligibility nonficetion, contact flame,

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Dear Parent/Guardian Children need healthy meals to learn.

Breakfast costs [\$]; jun

 CAV I APPLY ORLINE? Yes! You are encouraged to complete an online application instead of a paper application if you are able. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the r CAN'I APPLY ONLINE? Yes! You are encouraged to complete an online application instead of a paper application if you are able. The online application has the same requirements and will ask you for the same information as the paper application. Visit [website] to begin or to learn more about the contine application process. Contact faame. address. phone number. e-mails if you have any questions about the contine information as the paper application. Visit [website] to begin or to learn more about the online application process. Contact [name, address, phone number, e-mail] if you have any questions about the online application. MT CHILD'S APPLICATION WAS APPROVED LAST YEAR. DO I MEED TO FILL OUT A NEW ONE? Year. 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Children in households perticipating in WiC may be elicible for free or reduced price meals. Please send in an application. . WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE CHECKED? Yes, We may also ask you to send written proof of the household income you report. IFIDORT QUALIFY NOW, MAY I APPLY LATER? Yes, you may apply at any time during the school year. For example, children with a parent or quardian who becomes unemployed may become eligible for free and [ IF I DON'T QUALIFY NOW. MAY I APPLY MATER? Yee, you may apply at any time during the school year. Fo example, children with a parent or guardian who becomes unemployed may become eligible for bee and reduced price meats if the household income drops below the income limit. WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE SCHOOL'S DECISION ABOUT MY APPLICATION? You should talk to school officials. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to: Iname. address, phone number, e-mail. WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE SCHOOL'S DECISION ABOUT MY APPLICATION? You should talk to school officials. You also may ask for a hearing by calling or writing to: [name, address, phone number, e-mail]. MAY I APPLY IF SOMEONE IN MY HOUSEHOLD IS NOT A U.S. CITIZENT Yes. You, your children, or other household members do not have to be U.S. otherns to apply for free or reduced price meats. WHAT IF MY INCOME IS NOT ALWAYS THE SAME? List the amount that you <u>normally</u> receive. For example, if wan normalive make \$1000 Ageb month, but you missed some work last month and only made \$900, put down . WinkAr IF MY INCOME is NOT ALWAYS THE SAME? List the amount that you <u>inversally</u> receive. For example, if you normally make \$1000 each month, but you missed some work last month and only made \$2000 per month. If you normally get overtime, include it, but do not include it you down overtime sometimes. If you have lost a lob or had your hours or waces reduced, use your current income. that you made \$1000 per month. 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However, if any income fields are left empty or blank, those will <u>also</u> be counted ar serves. Please be careful when leaving income fields blank, as we will assume you <u>mean</u> to do so. 14. WE ARE IN THE MILITARY. DO WE REPORT OUR INCOME DIFFERENTLY? Your basic Pay and each boliuses must be recorded as income. If you get any each value allowances for off-basic housing, food, or olobhic, it must . WE ARE IN THE MILITARY. DO WE REPORT OUR INCOME DIFFERENTLY? Your basic pay and cash boliness must be reported as income. If you get any cash value allowances for off-basic housing, food, or coloning, in and also be included as income. However, if your housing is part of the Military Mousing Privalization Initiative, do not include your housing allowance as income. Any additional combat pay resulting from deployment is also 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 15. WHAT IF THERE ISN'T ENOUGH SPACE ON THE APPLICATION FOR MY FAMILY? List any additional household members on a senarate view of paper. and attach if to your application. Contact fairne. address. Babase WHAP IF THERE SAY T ENOUGH SPACE ON THE APPLICATION FOR MY FAMILY? List any additional househe members on a separate piece of paper, and attach it to your application. Contact [name, address, phone number, e-mail] to receive a second application. MY FAMILY WEEDS MORE HELP, ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR? To find out how to apply for fistate SWAPJ or other assistance hemefits. contact your local estimate office or call fistate hemefits. . MY FAMILY NEEDS MORE HELP, ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMS WE MIGHT APPLY FOR? To find out how to apply for [State SNAP] or other essistance benefits, contact your local assistance office or call [State hottine If you have other questions or need help, cell [phone number].

### Common Mistakes

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE SCHOOL MEALS continued

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How to Apply for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals

#### Food and Nutrition Service

#### How To Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals

Please use these instructions to help you fill out the application for free and reduced price school meals. You only need to submit one application per household, even if your children attend more than one school in the [Insert School District].

The application must be filled out completely to determine the eligibility of your child(ren) for free or reduced price school meals. Please follow these instructions in order! Each step of the instructions is the same as the steps on your application. If at any time you are not sure what to do next, please contact [Insert school/school district contact here; phone and email preferred].

Please use a pen (not a pencil) when filling out the application and do your best to print clearly.

#### Step 1: List ALL children, infants, and students up to and including grade 12

Tell us how many infants/toddlers, children not in school, and elementary/middle/high school students live in your household. They do NOT have to be related to you to be a part of your household.

Who should I list here? When filling out this section, please include ALL members in your household who are:

- · Children age 18 or under AND are supported with the household's income;
- . In your care under a formal foster arrangement through a court or state/local agency, or qualify as homeless, migrant, or runaway youth;
- Students attending (regardless of age) [school/school system here].

And a second	1 TO A REAL PROPERTY AND A REAL PROPERTY A REAL PROPERTY A		
A) List each child's name. Print each child's name. Use one line of the application for each child. When printing names, write one letter in each box. Stop if you run out of space. If there are more children present than lines on the application, attach a second piece of paper (or a second application if completing electronically) with all required information for the additional children. This also applies to adults in Step 3. "MI" is short for middle initial. Print the first letter of each child's middle name in the box.	If "Yes," write the grade level of the student in the "Grade" column to the right.	children listed are foster children, mark the "Foster Child" box next to the child's name. If you are ONLY applying for foster children, after finishing <b>Step 1</b> , go to <b>Step 4</b> . <u>Foster children who live with you may count as</u> <u>members of your household and should be</u> <u>listed on your application</u> . If you are applying for both foster and non-foster children, go to Step 3. Note: Adopted children are not considered foster children. A foster child is a	D) Are any children homeless, migrant, or runaway? If you believe any child listed in this section meets this description, mark the "Homeless, Migrant, Runaway" box next to the child's name and <u>complete all steps of the</u> <u>application</u> . Homeless, Migrant, Runaway <u>status</u> <u>must be confirmed</u> with the appropriate program staff. If the school district cannot confirm your student's homeless, migrant, or runaway status, then the school district will contact you to complete an income-based application. <u>You may</u> <u>choose to provide income information now</u> in order to prevent the school district from potentially needing to contact you later.

## Information Letters to Households

- The information letter (FAQs) must be sent to households before children begin attending school. The letters may be distributed by the postal service, e-mailed to the parent or guardian, or included in information packets provided to students on or before the first day of school.
  - SFAs using web-based applications are required to send only the FAQs. Include NDS on FAQs if it is the only document being sent to inform households of program availability.
- Direct Certification Letter must be sent to households of students directly certified through data matching from state agencies.

## Information Letters to Households

#### Options:

- Web based information letter (FAQs) with the link to the online application
- Hard copy application or email the following:
  - Frequently Asked Questions About Free and Reduced-Price School Meals (FAQs), and
  - How to Apply for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals must be provided to parents/guardians together.
  - The Prototype Application for Free and Reduced-Price School Meals,

LEAs <u>cannot</u> require a household to complete an application for benefits.

Any action that may result in a child being recognized as eligible to receive free or reduced- price school meals.

LEAs and SFAs must assure that a child's eligibility status is not disclosed at any point in the process of providing free or reduced-price meals or free milk. (This includes the application and notification process.)

### Family Friendly Application Translations

	PRESENTE SU SOLICITUD EL UNEX. DEVUELVALA A (nombre de la escuela o del distrito):
USDA Food and Nutrition Service	CONTACT US       REPORT FRAUD       ASKUSDA         Modelo de solicitud de comidas escolares sin costo y a precio reducido para hoga       Duelo de accuento de de accuento de de accuento de accuento de de accuento de de accuento de de accuento de
HOME DATA & RESEARCH FUNDING NEWSROOM RESOURCES OUR AGENCY PROGRAMS	Ppinner
National School Lunch Program Translated Applications	Image: Algoin miembro del hogar (Induido suted) participa en el Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementaria ISNAP, por sus siglas en inglés), el Programa de Asistencia Temporal para Familias         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar (Induido suted) participa en el Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementaria ISNAP, por sus siglas en inglés);         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar (Induido suted) participa en el Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementaria ISNAP, por sus siglas en inglés);         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar (Induido suted) participa en el Programa de Distribución de Alimentor en las Reservas Indigensis (PORR, por sus siglas en inglés);         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar (Induido suted) participa en el Programa de Distribución de Alimentor en las Reservas Indigensis (PORR, por sus siglas en inglés);         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar (Induido suted) participa en el Programa de Distribución de Alimentor en las Reservas Indigensis (PORR, por sus siglas en inglés);         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar (Induido suted) participa en de Programa de Distribución de Alimentor en las Reservas Indigensis (PORR, por sus siglas en inglés);         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar (Induido suted) participa en de Programa de Distribución de Alimentor en las Reservas Indigensis;         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar (Induido suted) participa en de Caso aquí y continue al PASO 4.         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar que no en al PASO 4.         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar que no en al PASO 4.         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar que no en al PASO 4.         Image: Algoin miembro del hogar que no en algoin de caso aquí y continue al PAS
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Translated applications are available in 34 languages and intended to be used directly by families. The application package has been limited to include only the initial information that families need under the "Resources for Households" heading. The additional prototype household letters are found under the "Resources for State and Local Agencies". All items are located within the link below.

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#### http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/applying-free-and-reduced-price-school-meals

### Foreign Language Translations

Contact the district Limited English Proficiency (LEP) liaison to assist in identifying any households that may benefit from the translations.

Contact your area specialist if other foreign language translations are needed for the F/R Meal application, FAQs, and How to Apply for F/R Meals to identified households.

## Processing F/R Meal Applications

- Applications with blank income fields are to be processed as complete.
- All areas of the application must be completed.
- Application must be considered complete if the racial/ethnic data collection questions are not answered.
- The last four digits of the Social Security Number must be included or "I do not have a Social Security Number" checked.

### 

Applications should be reviewed, and eligibility determination made within **10 operating days** of the receipt of the application.

Status is not retroactive. Status *Flexibility in Determining Effective Date of Eligibility requires ALSDE approval.* SP11-2014

Changes in status must be documented.



An incomplete application is missing required information, contains inconsistent information or is unclear.

- The LEA should make reasonable efforts to contact the household to obtain or clarify required information.
- Any income field left blank is a positive indication of no income; therefore, paper applications with blank income fields are to be processed as complete.

### **INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS**

The LEA has a regulatory obligation to verify "for cause" all approved applications that may be questionable.

The verification effort cannot delay the approval of the application.

If an application is complete and indicates that the child is eligible for free or reduced-price benefits, the application must be approved.

### **Questionable Applications ?**

Household Failure to Apply Local officials may complete an application for a student known to be eligible.

Applications must include:

- 1. Household size and income based on best information available.
- 2. Source of information must be noted on application.

Eligibility is based on application information.

Household must be notified.

This option is for limited use.

# Hardship Cases

USDA has no provision for making exceptions based on unusual household circumstances.

## Notification of Eligibility or Denial

Households must be notified, either in writing or verbally, of their child's eligibility status within 10 operating days of receipt of the application.

Households **denied** benefits must be notified in writing and include:

- 1. The reason for denial of benefits.
- 2. The right to appeal.
- 3. Instructions on how to appeal.
- 4. A statement that households may reapply for benefits at anytime during the school year with income documentation.

USDA Prototype: Notice to Households of Approval/Denial of Benefits

# **Appeal Process**

# Household may appeal determination.

District must follow hearing procedures.



## **Decline of Benefits by Parent or Guardians**

Households notified of their children's eligibility must contact the LEA or school if the household chooses to decline the free meal benefits.

 Parents/Guardians may decline benefits or request reduced benefits.
 Document by source, initial, and date.
 Meals are claimed at the status the parent's/guardian's request.



Free and Reduced-Priced Meals

# Recordkeeping

Follow the most restrictive record retention policy between USDA, Alabama, and your local district.

- Federal three years plus the current (4 years total)
- State current plus two years following the closure of your last Administrative Review.
- Approved Applications: date approved, level of benefits, signature or initials of reviewing official.
- Denied Applications: reason for denial, date of denial, date notice sent, signature of reviewing official.
- Dates of transfers, withdrawals and changes in eligibility must be maintained.

# Filing and Maintaining Applications

- It is recommended that applications are filed in the district central office.
- ♣Applications must be readily retrievable.

APPLICATION

- Six categories of applications:
  - Free
  - Reduced
  - Denied
  - Withdrawn
  - Temporary
  - Verification

Document changes on applications.

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# **Documenting Changes**

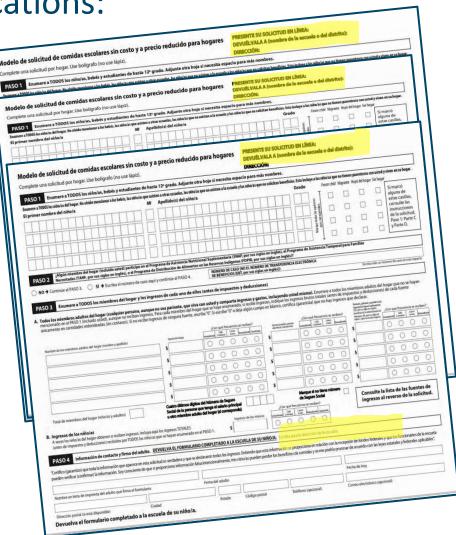
### When documenting changes on applications:

- ✤ Initial
- Date

Remember!

### Include any important information

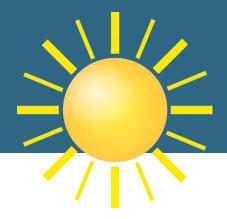
- Who
- What
- When
- Where
- Why



# **Disclosure of Confidential Information**

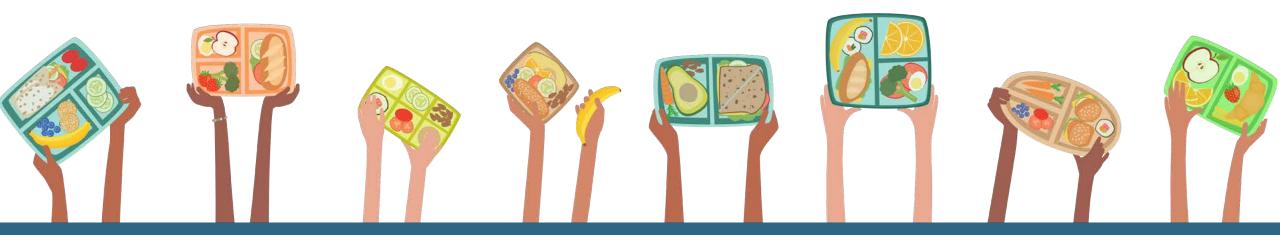
- The LEA must seek written consent from the parent or guardian who signed the application to use the information provided on the application for non-program purpose.
- Parental consent must be obtained each school year and consent forms cannot be extended from one school year to the next.
- Eligibility may be disclosed without consent to programs such as Federal Education Programs, state health or education programs; Federal, state or local means-tested nutrition programs.





# Summer-EBT Benefits

- New Summer -EBT goes into effect summer 2024
- Guidance is being developed by USDA
- SA will receive training once guidance is rolled out
- ALSDE will promptly forward guidance to SFAs



### 1. Clarification - SFAs are required to distribute letters to the household to each student. Is it enough to have the letter posted to the school's web page and online application portal

 To inform families about the availability of free and reduced-price meals or free milk, schools must distribute information letters to the households of children attending the school. [7 CFR 245.5(a)(1)]. The letters may be distributed by the postal service, e-mailed to the parent or guardian, or included in information packets provided to students.

### 2. Is distribution of paper application packets on the first day of school approved?

- Yes, distribution of a complete paper application packet (consisting of an application form, How-to-Apply instructions, and the letter to households/FAQs) is an allowable distribution method.
- SFAs (School Food Authority) that do not have a web-based F/R application, must provide a paper application packet to all enrolled students in one of the distribution methods highlighted in question #1.
- SFAs that have a State approved web-based F/R application, must send only the letter to household/FAQ letter to all households in one of the distribution methods highlighted in question #1. Because of the availability of the web-based application, a paper application packet does not have to be available for all enrolled students, but available upon request
  - The letter to household must include a statement explaining how to obtain a paper application if a household decides it can't or won't complete an application electronically.



#### **3.** Are districts required to send DC notification letters to students in CEP schools?

- No, For SFAs participating in CEP a notice of approval, as required by <u>7 CFR 245.6(c)(6)</u>, would not be appropriate since individual student eligibility is not an issue.
- The correct protocol for informing the public about CEP is found in <u>SP 54-2016</u> "Notification and Publication Requirements" Question 3, which states "LEAs electing CEP should use their usual channels of communication (i.e., the required public announcement included at 7 CFR 245.5) to notify that school meals will be available at no cost to all enrolled students.
- LEAs may also consider including information about CEP when sending out "back-to-school" packets with student registration materials each fall, posting information about CEP on the district website, and/or sharing information about CEP in student handbooks."

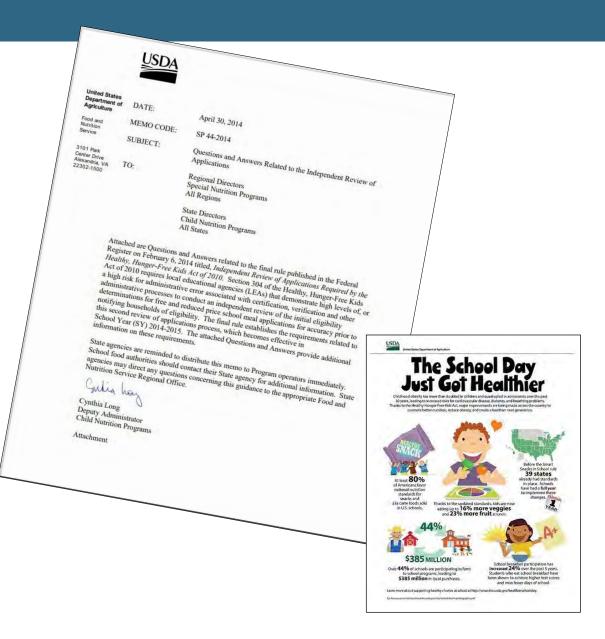
#### 4. If all applications are processed online, should a copy of all processed applications be printed

- No, keep an electronic copy to have readily available.
- 5. When will the DC file be exported to PowerSchool?
  - The DC file will be exported to PowerSchool on July 1<sup>st</sup>. LEAs will receive the DC file on July 2<sup>nd</sup>.



# **Independent Review**

Section 304 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 requires local educational agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate high levels of, or a high risk for administrative error associated with certification, verification and other administrative processes to conduct an **independent review** of the initial eligibility determinations for free and reduced-price school meal applications for accuracy prior to notifying households of eligibility.



### Independent Review Selection Criteria

April 30, 2014	
United States Department of Agriculture Netroion Service UNITED Service MEMO CODE: Service Service Service Service Nutrition Service S	All LEAs in their first year of operation of NSLP.
Canto VA All Regions 22302-1500 State Directors Child Nutrition Programs All States	
Attached are Questions and Answers related to the final rule published in un- Attached are Questions and Answers related to the final rule publications Requ Register on February 6, 2014 titled, Independent Review of Applications Requ Register on February 6, 2014 titled, agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate high the force Kids Act of 2010. Section 304 of the Healthy, Hunger	
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School Year (SY) 2017 information on these requirements. State agencies are reminded to distribute this memo to Program operator State agencies are reminded to distribute this fate agency for additional State agencies should contact their State agency for additional	
agencies may direct any direct any office. Nutrition Service Regional Office. Carting hear	administrative review.
Cynthia Long Deputy Administrator Child Nutrition Programs Attachment	

### Independent Review Process for SFAs

Conduct second review of applications as a re-evaluation of the initial determination. This review must be completed before the household is notified of eligibility and must not delay processing within the first 10 operating days of receipt.

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	Cyn	thia Long buty Administrator buty Administrator	
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The person completing Independent Review must be a third-party who was not involved in original eligibility determination. This individual must be trained on how to make application determinations.

If required to complete Independent Review, SFAs will complete this process annually unless otherwise determined by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) staff.

> Enter information into the online Verification Summary by the date determined and published yearly by ALSDE.

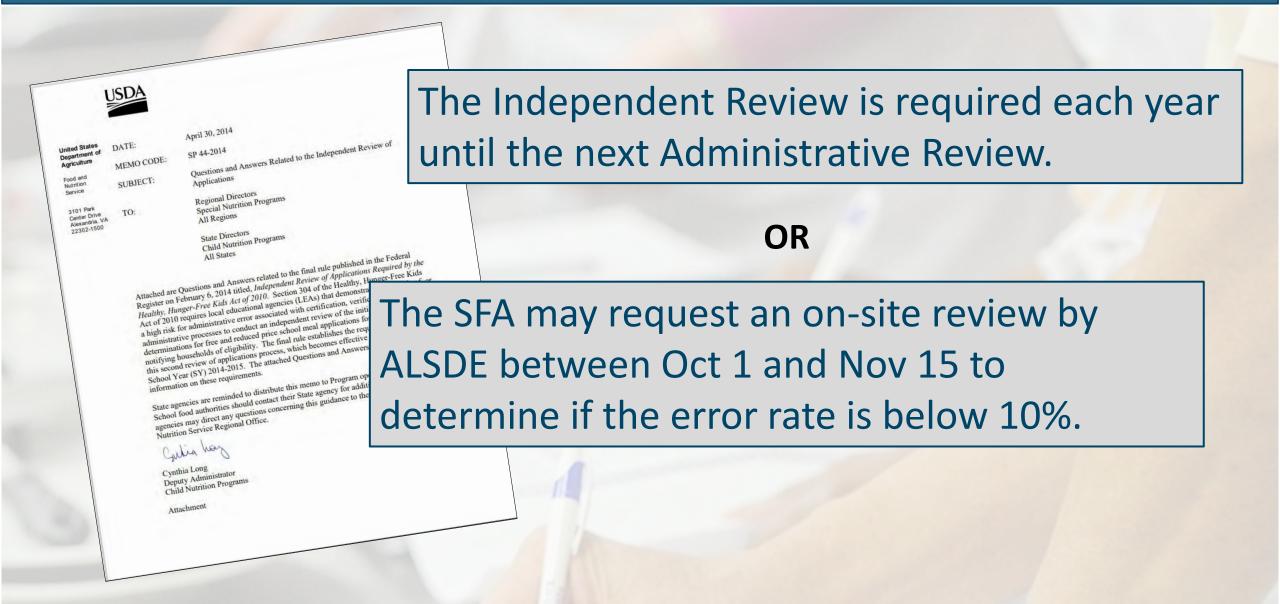
## Independent Review Process for SFAs cont'd

Confirming that the application was correctly approved based on current income guidelines and/or other categorical eligibility guidelines.

### Ensure that:

- The confirming official must validate the master list or roster and POS roster of students to ensure all records accurately state student's meal status.
- The application includes:
  - 1. Signature of an adult household member
  - 2. Last four digits of a social security number or indication of "none"
  - 3. Names of all household members including the student for whom application is made
  - 4. Income amount for each household member identified
  - 5. Income source
  - 6. Income frequency or categorical information, if applicable

### How long does the Independent Review requirement last?



## Don't Forget to Train



CNP Directors are responsible for training <u>all</u> staff members who process Free and Reduced-Price Meal Applications.

Remember when training your staff this year, encourage school secretaries and principals to update student addresses on a regular basis. We discovered through the Pandemic EBT process that many families did not have accurate contact information which delayed receipt of their PEBT cards.

STEP 1 List ALL children, infants, and students up	to and including	grade	12. Attach an	other she	eet of pa	per if yo	u need sj	ace for	r more n	ames.								
List ALL children in the household. Do not forget to list Child's First Name			ng other schoo Child's Last N		en not in	school, a	nd childre	n not a	pplying f	or benef	its. This inc Foster C			related to you Runaway		household Iomeless	L	
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STEP 2 Do any household members (including yo	ou) participate in:	SNAP,	TANF, or FDP	IR?	-					-				_				
O NO → Go to STEP 3. O YES →	Write case num	_				CASE	NUMBER	NOT EB	IT NUMBE	ER):				Write only one	e case nur	mber in this	space.	
STEP 3 List ALL household members and income	for each member	r (befor	e taxes and d	eduction	is)									_				
List all Adult Household Members not listed in ST deductions) for each source in whole dollars (no Name of Adult Household Members (First and Last)		y do no	t receive inco How Bivery 2 Weeks	me from then receive 2x Month	any sour	ce, write		u enter	'0' or le	Ave any How off Every 2 Weeks	fields blan	worthy	re certifyin Pensions Social Se		) that the weeky	How of Every 2 Weeks	ten received	Mon
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Sometimes children in the household earn or receive	ons) received by AL <u>RETURN COM</u>	PLETER	FORM TO Y	OUR CHIL		001:	Ins	ert sch	ool addr	ess he <mark>re</mark>	weeks	0			nd that s	chool off	icials may	verify.
Sometimes children in the household earn or receive include the TOTAL income (before taxes and deductic STEP2 & Contact Information and adult signature. T certify (promise) that all information on this appli (confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information of t	ns) received by AL <u>RETURN COM</u> cation is true, and osely give faise inf	IPLETE d that a formation	D FORM TO Y Il Income is re- on, my childre Signature of A se	DUR CHIL	understi se meal	DOL: and that benefits,	Ins this infor	ert sch mation	ool addr is given	in conne d under a	ection with applicable	n the rec State an	eipt of Fed d Federal	Jeral funds, ai	nd that s			verify.
Sometimes children in the household earn or receive include the TOTAL income (before taxes and deductic STEP2 & Contact Information and adult signature. T certify (promise) that all information on this appli (confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information. I am aware that if ( purpo ( confirm) the information of t	RETURN COM	State	D FORM TO Y II income is re Signature of A se	DUR CHIL ported. I. in may los	understü se meal	2001: and that seerefits, Zip	Ins this infor and I ma	ert sch mation y be pr	ool addr	in conne d under a	ection with applicable Tod	n the rec State an	eipt of Fed d Federal	Jeral funds, ai			icials may	verify

Department of Education Migrant Program Coordinator Contact: Sally Meek <u>sally.meek@alsde.edu</u> 334-694-4527 State Department of Education Homeless Program Coordinator Contact: LaDonna Rudolph ladonna.rudolph@alsde.edu 334-694-4534 Department of Human Resources Contact: Brandon Hardin 334-242-1700





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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: <u>USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form</u> from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, 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; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

ATA A CONTRACTOR

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

\*This language was added pursuant to the May 5, 2022, USDA memorandum. However, the inclusion and applicability of this language is currently under challenge in the matter of *The State of Tennessee, et al. v. USDA, et al.*, Case No. 3:22-cv-00257, and may be subject to change.



## Post Assessment

https://forms.office.com/r/hw6ajWzRL5

