



Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Applications SY 2020-2021

PRESENTED BY:

JULIE AUTREY, MS

SUMMER 2020 WEBINAR

Free & Reduced Price Meals Application Webinar

SY2021

AGENDA

1. Verification Manual overview
2. USDA Prototype Options
 - Paper Application
 - Web-based Application
3. Frequently Asked Questions
4. Application Distribution
5. Public Release
6. Application Processing
7. Incomplete Applications
8. Notification of Eligibility or Denial
9. Overt Identification
10. Recordkeeping
11. Appeal Process
12. Independent Review
13. Training

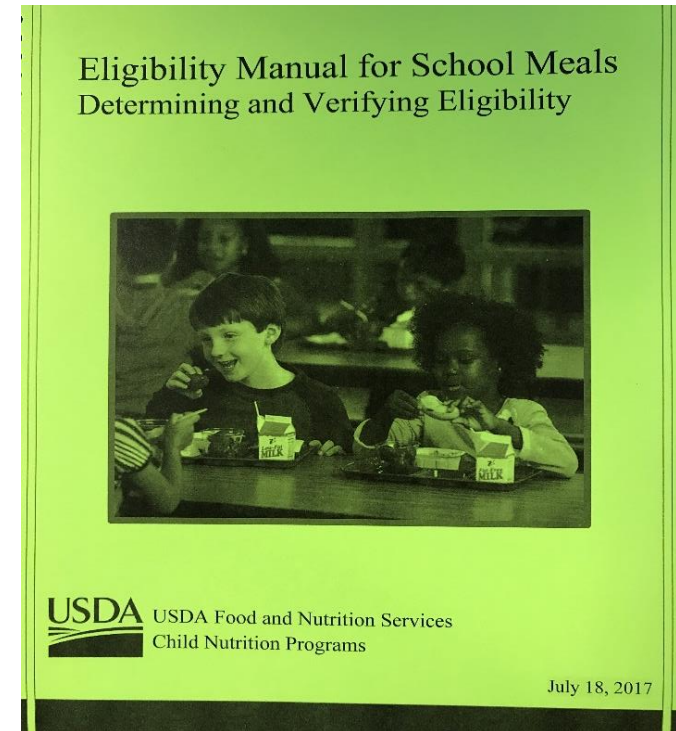
Click on the link below to access the recorded webinar:

<https://alsde.webex.com/alsde/lsr.php?RCID=935f9ff582c64aa3942caf1214072d87>

Reference

Eligibility Manual for School Meals Determining and Verifying Eligibility School Year 2017-2018

(SY 20-21 will continue to use this version).





Free & Reduced Price School Meals Application Prototype Email

USDA Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application and additional resources for School Year (SY) 2021 was sent to all SFA's via email on May 4, 2020.

USDA Prototype Application Email (cont)

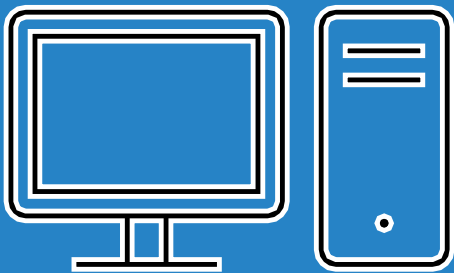
The *Prototype Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals* is accompanied by the following materials:

- 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; (**To ensure compliance use the letter posted on the ALSDE website.**)
 - Sharing Information with Medicaid/SCHIP
 - Sharing Information with Other Programs
- Prototype household benefit issuance notifications:
 - Notice to Direct Certification
 - *Notice to Households of Approval/Denial of Benefits*
- SY20-21 Income Eligibility Chart
- SY20-21 Public Release
- Prototype verification materials: o
 - We Must Check Your Application
 - We Have Checked Your Application

NOTE: The USDA Non-Discrimination is not required on FAQ if you send out all information in a packet. If you send documents out 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.

The translated versions

USDA Prototype Web-Based Application requirements



USDA Prototype Web-Based Application

- Prototype letter to households, *Frequently Asked Questions About Free and Reduced Price School Meals*
- *If you want to encourage use of the web-based application, you are only required to send out the Letter to Household (NOTE: Non-Discrimination Statement must be included on Letter)*
- *SEE **sample** changes below to the letter to reflect information related to the electronic application.*

PAPER APPLICATION Letter

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Dear Parent/Guardian:

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. **This packet includes an application for free or reduced price meal benefits, and a set of detailed instructions.** Below are some common questions and answers to help you with the application process.

Web-Based APPLICATION sample Letter

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Dear Parent/Guardian:

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 [https://www.districtlink]. 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.

USDA Prototype Web-Based Application Source Code

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

Welcome!

This is the Applewood School District electronic application for free and reduced priced meals for the USDA'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 [paper application](#), you can print and complete it and then return it to us at 100 Main Street, Anytown, USA 12345.

[Get started](#)

Alabama State Department of Education

Every Child a Graduate. Every Graduate Prepared

Child Nutrition Programs

Announcements

Child Nutrition Corona-19 Guidance

Alabama State Department of Education

Every Child a Graduate. Every Graduate Prepared

Child Nutrition Programs > Forms and Resources: School Nutrition Programs

Navigation: At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program, Audit, Child and Adult Care Food Programs, Child Nutrition Programs, Family Day Care Homes, Farm to Preschool, Food Distribution, **School Nutrition Programs**, Summer Food Service Program, Waivers

Title	Description
School Nutrition Programs Forms	Listing of current forms used by programs operating NSLP, SBP, CEP, SSO, Smart Snacks Standards.

Alabama State Department of Education

Every Child a Graduate. Every Graduate Prepared

School Nutrition Programs > Forms: Click on the subject tabs below to locate forms for School Nutrition Programs.

Free and Reduced Forms	Equipment	Meal Pattern	Production Records	School Review Forms	
Seamless Summer Option	Special Milk	Special Diets	Verification	Paid Lunch Equity	Director Certification
Smart Snack Standards	Food Service Management Contract - FSMC		Health Inspections		
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program - FFVP	Assistance Request	Non Program Food Revenue Tool			
OVS and Non-OVS Posters	Alabama Junior Chef Competition	Community Eligibility Provision - CEP			

Title	Description
School Meals - Translated Applications	School Meals - Translated Applications
Siblings Extension of Categorically Eligibility Documentation	Siblings Extension of Categorically Eligibility Documentation
State Memo - USDA Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application and Verification Forms for School Year 20-21	State Memo - USDA Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application and Verification Forms for School Year 20-21
SY20-21 Customized F-R Application Checklist	SY20-21 Customized F-R Application Checklist
SY20-21 Free and Reduced Price Meals Application	SY20-21 Free and Reduced Price Meals Application
SY20-21 Frequently Asked Questions About Free and Reduced Price School Meals	SY20-21 Frequently Asked Questions About Free and Reduced Price School Meals
SY20-21 How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price Meal Application	SY20-21 How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price Meal Application
SY20-21 Income Eligibility Guidelines July 2020- June 2021	SY20-21 Income Eligibility Guidelines July 2020- June 2021
SY20-21 Public Release	SY20-21 Public Release
SY20-21 USDA Prototype Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals Accompanied Documents	SY20-21 USDA Prototype Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals Accompanied Documents
UPDATED 2017 Eligibility Manual for School Meals - JULY 18 2017	UPDATED 2017 Eligibility Manual for School Meals - JULY 18 2017

Prototype Application Link

The *USDA Free and Reduced Price Meals Prototype Application* for SY 21 is posted on the Alabama State Department of Education website.

Click on Forms and Resources - School Nutrition Programs

School Nutrition Programs -

SY 20-21 Free/Reduced Application resources.

State Approval

APPLICATION FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS &
ADDITIONAL VERIFICATION FORMS

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 free for all to access, these materials are not structured for direct or immediate use by households unless adapted and integrated with appropriate data management systems at the State and/or local levels.

USDA Prototype Options

2020-2021 Prototype Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals

Complete one application per household. Please use a pen (not a pencil).

Apply online: **INSERT URL HERE**

USDA Prototype Application Paper and Online

USDA has a field on the top right where you can include your web address where households may complete an online application if applicable.

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.

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

Definition of Household Member: "Anyone who is living with you and shares income and expenses, even if not related."

Children in Foster care and children who meet the definition of Homeless, Migrant or Runaway are eligible for free meals. Read How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals for more information.

Child's First Name	MI	Child's Last Name	Grade	Student? Yes No	Homeless, Migrant, Runaway Foster Child
				<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"/>	<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"/>
				<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

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

If NO > Go to STEP 3.

If YES > Write a case number here then go to STEP 4 (Do not complete STEP 3)

Case Number:

Write only one case number in this space.

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

Are you unsure what income to include here?

Flip the page and review the charts titled "Sources of Income" for more information.

The "Sources of Income for Children" chart will help you with the Child Income section.

The "Sources of Income for Adults" chart will help you with the All Adult Household Members section.

A. Child Income

Sometimes children in the household earn or receive income. Please include the TOTAL income received by all Household Members listed in STEP 1 here.

Child Income	How often?			
	Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Monthly
\$	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. All Adult Household Members (including yourself)

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 gross income (before taxes) for each source in whole dollars (no cents) only. If they do not receive income from any source, write '0'. If you enter '0' or leave any fields blank, you are certifying (promising) that there is no income to report.

Name of Adult Household Members (First and Last)	Earnings from Work	How often?				Public Assistance/ Child Support/Alimony	How often?				Pensions/Retirement/ All Other Income	How often?			
		Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Monthly		Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Monthly		Weekly	Bi-Weekly	2x Month	Monthly
	\$	<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"/>	<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"/>	\$	<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"/>	<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"/>	\$	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<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 (SSN) of Primary Wage Earner or Other Adult Household Member

Check if no SSN

STEP 4 Contact information and adult signature. Mail Completed Form To: **INSERT YOUR SCHOOL/DISTRICT MAILING ADDRESS HERE**

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

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Street Address (if available)	Apt #	City	State	Zip
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
Printed name of adult signing the form	Signature of adult			Today's date

Frequently Asked Questions

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.
- If changing font size (must be legible)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Dear Parent/Guardian:

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. This packet includes an application for free or reduced price meal benefits, and a set of detailed instructions. Below are some common questions and answers to help you with the application process.

1. WHO CAN GET FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS?

- All children in households receiving benefits from [State SNAP], [the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)] or [State TANF], are eligible for free meals.
- 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.
- Children may receive free or reduced price meals if your household's income is within the limits of the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines. Your children may qualify for free or reduced price meals if your household income falls at or below the limits on this chart.

FEDERAL ELIGIBILITY INCOME CHART For School Year 2020-2021			
Household size	Yearly	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$23,606	\$1,968	\$454
2	\$31,894	\$2,658	\$614
3	\$40,182	\$3,349	\$773
4	\$48,470	\$4,040	\$933
5	\$56,758	\$4,730	\$1,092
6	\$65,046	\$5,421	\$1,251
7	\$73,334	\$6,112	\$1,411
8	\$81,622	\$6,802	\$1,570
Each additional person:	\$8,288	\$691	\$160

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.

_____ No, an online application is not available at this time.

Frequently Asked Questions (cont)

Be sure to select “yes or no”

*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

6. MY CHILD'S APPLICATION WAS APPROVED LAST YEAR. DO I NEED TO FILL OUT A NEW ONE? Yes. Your child's application is only good for that school year and for the first few days of this school year, through [date]. 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.

FAQ Common Mistake Example

HOW TO APPLY FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE SCHOOL MEALS

Use these instructions to help you fill out the application for free or [reduced price](#) school meals. You only need to submit one application if your children attend more than one school in [\[School District\]](#). The application must be filled out completely to certify your children for 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 unsure what to do next, please contact [\[School/school district contact here; phone and email preferred\]](#).

PLEASE USE A PEN (NOT A PENCIL) WHEN FILLING OUT THE APPLICATION AND DO YOUR BEST TO PRINT CLEARLY.

STEP 1: LIST ALL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS WHO ARE INFANTS, CHILDREN, AND STUDENTS UP TO AND INCLUDING AGE 18

List all household members who 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 foster arrangement, or qualify as homeless, migrant, or runaway youth;

Students attending [\[school/school system here\]](#), regardless of age.

<p>A) List each child's name. Print each child's name on 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 and provide all required information for the additional children.</p>	<p>B) Is the child a student at [name of school/school system here]? Mark 'Yes' or 'No' under the column titled "Student" to tell us which children attend [name of school/school district here]. If you marked 'Yes,' write the grade level of the student in the 'Grade' column to the right.</p>	<p>C) Do you have any foster children? If any 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 STEP 1, go to STEP 4. <u>Foster children who live with you may count as members of your household and should be listed on your application.</u> If you are applying for both foster and non-foster children, go to step 3.</p>	<p>D) Are any children homeless, migrant, or runaway? If listed in this section, provide a description, name, and address of the child's name and the application.</p>
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STEP 2: DO ANY HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS CURRENTLY PARTICIPATE IN SNAP, TANF, OR FDPIR?

If **anyone in your household (including you) currently participates in one or more of the assistance programs listed below, your children are eligible for free or reduced price school meals.**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or [\[insert State SNAP here\]](#).

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or [\[insert State TANF here\]](#).

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR).

<p>If no one in your household participates in any of the above listed programs: Leave STEP 2 blank and go to STEP 3.</p>	<p>B) If anyone in your household participates in any of the above listed programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write a case number for SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR. You only need to provide one case number in one of these programs and do not know your case number, contact: [State/local agency] Go to STEP 4.
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STEP 3: REPORT INCOME FOR ALL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

How do I report my income?

Use the charts titled "[Sources of Income for Adults](#)" and "[Sources of Income for Children](#)," printed on the back side of the application form to determine the amount of income to report.

Report all amounts in GROSS INCOME ONLY. Report all income in whole dollars. Do not include cents.

Gross income is the total income received before taxes.

Many people think of income as the amount they "take home" and not the total, "gross" amount. Make sure that the income you report on this application is the gross amount.

How To Apply

Translated Versions

The current translated application materials,
available at:

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



Translated Versions

Change the **[bold bracketed fields]** or **highlighted sections** with state/district/facility specific information for the:

- Application Prototype
- FAQs
- How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals

Family Friendly Application Translations

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.

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

Translated Versions

- Contact the district Limited English Proficiency (LEP) liaison to assist in identifying any households that may benefit from translated versions.
- Distribute the Application, FAQs, and How to Apply to identified households

- The Prototype Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals,
- Frequently Asked Questions About Free and Reduced Price School Meals, and
- How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals must be provided to parents/guardians together.
 - If separated, the USDA Non-Discrimination Statement must be added to the Frequently Asked Questions About Free and Reduced Price School Meals and the How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals.
- LEAs cannot require a household to complete an application for benefits.

Application Distribution

Benefits Prior to Processing Applications

30-Day Carryover

USDA Food Nutrition Service (FNS) strongly encourages carryover between LEAs to ensure students do not experience a gap in school meal access.



When children move to a new LEA, either at the beginning of the new school year or during the summer months, the new LEA is encouraged to use the former LEA's eligibility determination from the previous school year and carryover the child's eligibility status.

Benefits Prior to Processing Applications

30-Day Carryover

All this information is in the Eligibility Manual!

Districts/facilities **CANNOT** establish a shorter time frame for carryover.

- 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 from the previous year;
- Children directly certified for free 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) 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.

REMEMBER: New Eligibility determination replaces carryover!

Benefits Prior to Processing Applications

30-Day Carryover from CEP or Provision 2 Schools

~FNS strongly encourages State agencies to implement the discretionary carryover provision for children transitioning from Provision 1, 2, or 3 or CEP schools to ensure these children do not experience a gap in school meal access. [7 CFR 245.6(c)(2)].

~Alabama allows the LEA to carry over children's eligibility for free reimbursable meals for up to 30 operating days or until a new eligibility determination is made for the current school year, whichever comes first.

This discretion applies to moves within an LEA or between LEAs.

Processing 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” indicated.

Application Processing Time Frame

- Applications should be reviewed and eligibility determination made within **10** operating days of the receipt of the application.
- Status is not retroactive.
- Changes in status must be documented



Incomplete Applications

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

The LEA should make reasonable efforts to contact the household in order 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



01

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

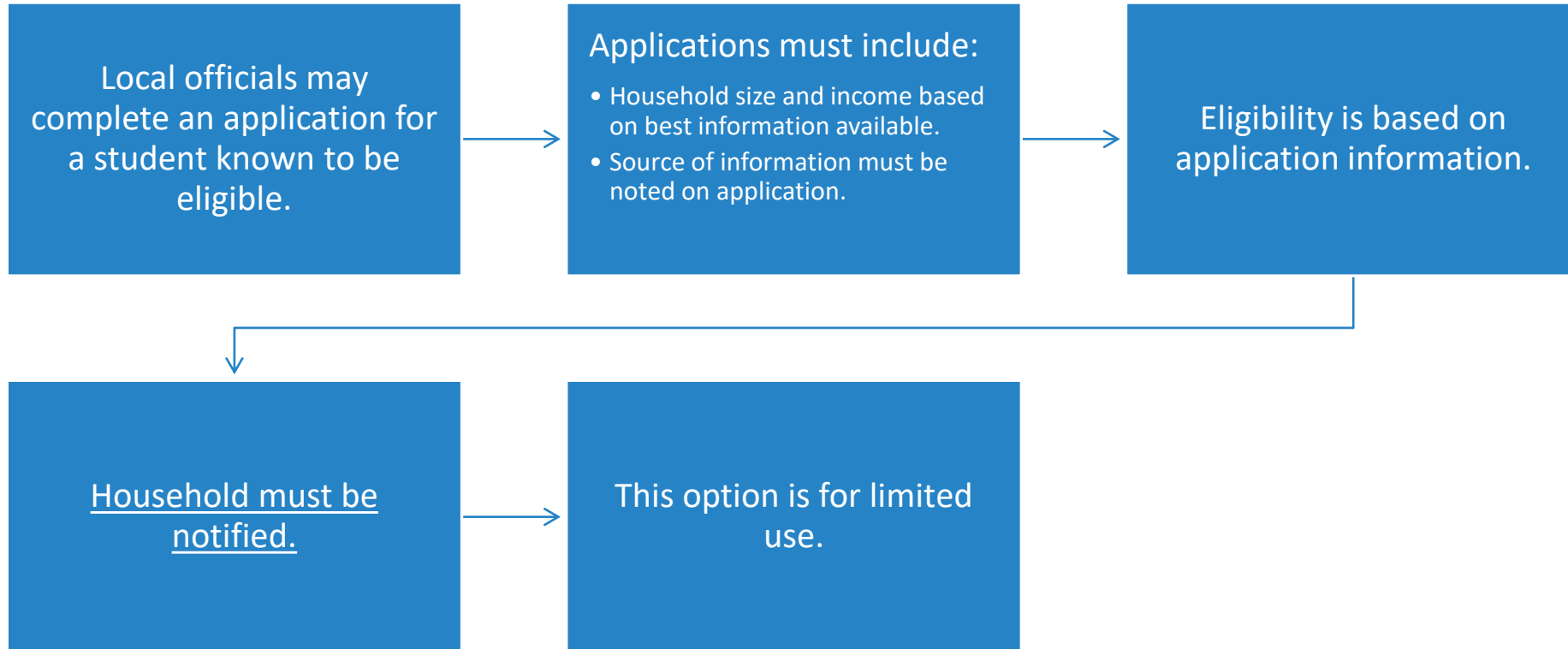
02

The verification effort cannot delay the approval of the application.

03

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



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:
 - The reason for denial of benefits.
 - The right to appeal.
 - Instructions on how to appeal.
 - 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

Notification of Eligibility through Direct Certification

Must notify of eligibility determination in writing.

- 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 and to all school-aged children in the household
- Must explain how the household can notify the LEA if the household does not wish to receive free benefits for directly certified children

Decline of Benefits by Parents 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 parents/guardians request.

Any action that may result in a child being recognized as potentially eligible to receive or be certified for free or reduced price school meals or free milk.

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.

Overt Identification



A child's eligibility is in effect from the date of eligibility for the current school year until a new application is approved or denied or children are directly certified, up to 30 operating days into the subsequent school year.



If no new application is submitted or children are not directly certified in the subsequent school year, children must continue to receive the previous year's level of benefits for up to 30 operating days.

Duration of Eligibility



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 LEA cannot send a notice of denial or adverse action if a child's eligibility expires at the end of the 30-day carryover period.
 - 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.
- ❖ There has been some confusion regarding the notice of adverse action – page 54 Eligibility Manual



Recordkeeping

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

It is recommended that applications be filed in the district central office.

Applications must be readily retrievable

Six categories of applications:

Free

Reduced

Denied

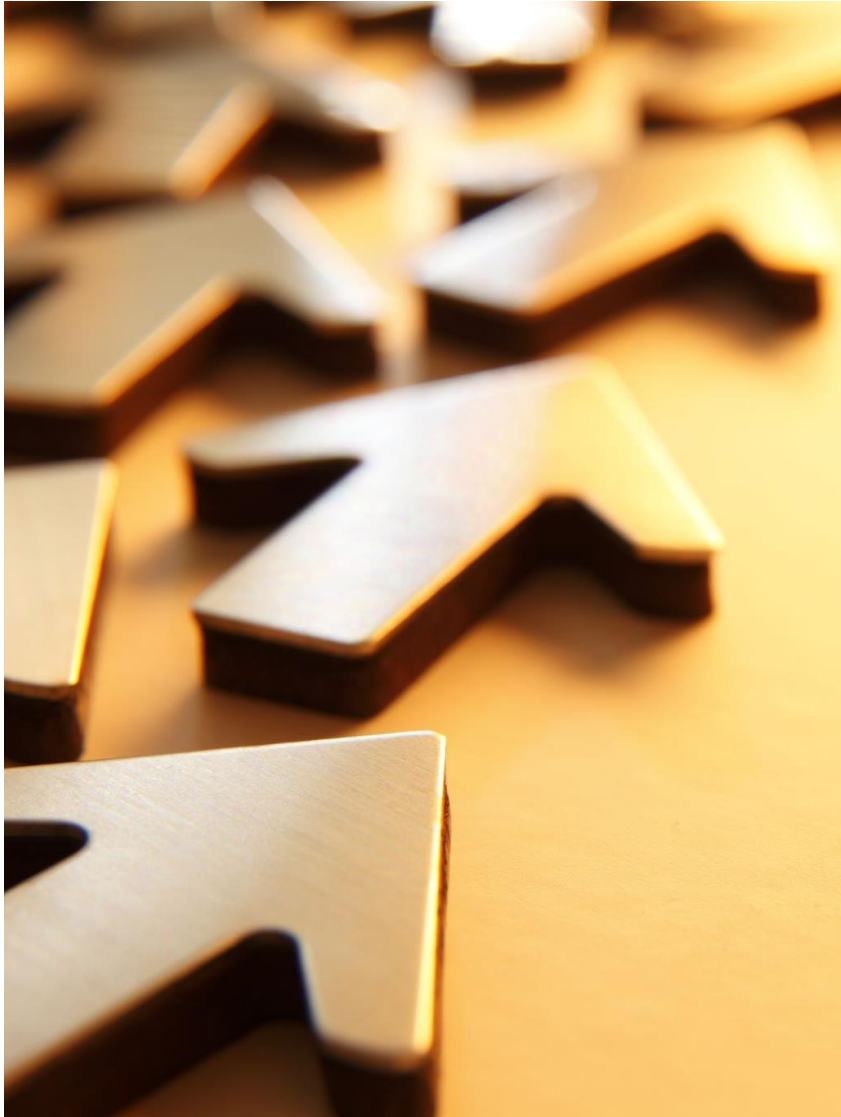
Withdrawn

Temporary

Verification

Document changes on applications

Filing/Maintaining Applications



Documenting Changes

- Initial
- Date
- Include any important information
 - ✓ Who
 - ✓ What
 - ✓ When
 - ✓ Where
 - ✓ Why



Appeal Process

- Household may appeal determination.
- District must follow hearing procedures.

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.
- 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.

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



All LEAs with a 3% or more certification/benefit issuance error, as determined by the state agency during an administrative review.



All LEAs in their first year of operation of NSLP.

Independent Review LEA Selection Criteria

Process for School Food Authority (SFA)

1

The Independent Review must be completed within 10 days of receipt of the free and reduced application and before the household is notified of eligibility.

2

The person completing Independent Review must be a third person who was not involved in original eligibility determination.

3

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

4

Enter information into the online Verification Summary by the date published within the ALSDE Verification webinar each year.

- Third party re-evaluation of 100% free and reduced applications.
 - Confirmation that the application was correctly approved based on current income eligibility guidelines or categorical eligibility information as applicable.
 - The master list or roster of student names correctly records the student's eligibility.
 - The application must be complete including:
 - Signature of an adult household member
 - Last four digits of a social security number or indication of "none"
 - Names of all household members including the student for whom application is made
 - Income amount for each household member identified
 - Income source
 - Income frequency or categorical information, if applicable

Process for School Food Authority (SFA)

Independent Review Results

Retain the results of Independent Review to enter in the Verification Summary Report.

Training

CNP Directors are responsible for training all staff members who process Free and Reduce Price Meal Applications.

Remember when training your staff this year, to 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.



State Coordinator Contact Information

- Department of Human Resources
 - Brandon Hardin (334-242-1700)
- Migrant Contact:
 - Sally Meek sally.meek@alsde.edu 334-694-4527
- Homeless Contact:
 - Kristen Dial kristen.dial@alsde.edu 334-694-4529



Questions?

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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