

Considerations for Direct Certification with Medicaid

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Demonstration Project to Evaluate Direct Certification with Medicaid. This project allows school food authorities (SFAs) to use Medicaid (known as HUSKY A in Connecticut) as a method of directly certifying children for free or reduced-price meals or free milk. This document summarizes the important considerations for SFAs when directly certifying children through Medicaid. All personnel involved with the process of certifying applications and conducting verification should review this document.

Applications Not Required

Households that are directly certified based on Medicaid data are not required to submit applications for meal or milk benefits and are not subject to verification.

Direct Certification Codes

The direct certification list includes the codes below.

FS (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits)	Free benefits extend to all children in the household
AF (Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) benefits)	Free benefits extend to all children in the household
OT (other, foster child)	Free benefits do not extend to all children in the household
FM (free Medicaid)	Free benefits extend to all children in the household
RM (reduced Medicaid)	Reduced-price benefits extend to all children in the household

Reduced-price Eligibility Determined through Medicaid

Due to differences in household definition and income assessments between programs, some children directly certified for **reduced-price** meals through Medicaid may have been eligible for free meals if the household applied. The USDA requires that these households receive notice of the income level used and be offered the opportunity to apply if their income is within the limit for free meals using the current U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [income eligibility guidelines](#).

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The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) parent notification letter (version 3), *Reduced-price Eligibility Established through Direct Certification Based on Medicaid Benefits*, includes the income eligibility guidelines. This form is available in English and Spanish in the ["Parent/Guardian Notification Letters"](#) section of the CSDE's [Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Direct Certification Using Handwritten Case Numbers

Under the Medicaid pilot, children are not considered to be categorically eligible. They may be directly certified **only via an automated data matching process with the Medicaid eligibility records**. Therefore, households are not allowed to handwrite their Medicaid case number on the application or provide "proof" of Medicaid for their child to be eligible for free or reduced-price meals or free milk.

Negative Impact and Medicaid Determination

Students already certified for free or reduced-price meals or free milk based on an application or direct certification with another program cannot be negatively impacted by the match with Medicaid data. The CSDE has safeguards to ensure that direct certification for SNAP and TFA supersede a free or reduced eligibility status through Medicaid. However, the local educational agency's (LEA) free determination supersedes the Medicaid reduced-price status if the LEA determines that a child is directly certified as reduced-price eligible through Medicaid, and the child is determined to be a foster child, homeless, runaway, or enrolled in a federally funded Head Start Program, or eligible for free benefits based on an approved application.

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Increasing the number of direct certifications for **free** school meals by matching with Medicaid has a direct impact on a school or district's identified student percentage (ISP) under the [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\)](#). However, direct certifications for reduced-price meals will not impact the ISP, since the ISP is the percentage of students certified for **free** meals without an application.

Verification and Medicaid

If a child is directly certified as FM (free Medicaid) on the direct certification list, the child (and all applicable children in the household) must be included in section 3-3b of the Verification Collection Report (FNS 742). Children identified as RM (reduced Medicaid) (and all applicable children in the household) are reported in section 3-5 of the Verification Collection Report. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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Resources

Common Acronyms and Abbreviations for Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition

Programs and Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Acronyms_Abbreviations_Determining_Eligibility_Meals_Milk_SNP.pdf

Direct Certification Contact List for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/DirectCert/Direct_Certification_Contact_List.pdf

Direct Certification for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Direct-Certification>

Direct Certification Upload Process for Private Schools (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/DirectCert/Direct_Certification_Upload_Private_Schools.pdf

Direct Certification Web Application (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Direct-Certification>

Direct Certification with Medicaid: Steps to Consider when Working with Point-of-Sale (POS) Software Companies (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/DirectCert/Direct_Certification_Medicaid_Steps_POS_Software.pdf

Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Eligibility-for-Free-and-Reduced-price-Meals-and-Free-Milk-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Eligibility Manual for School Meals (USDA):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Forms/FreeRed/USDA_eligibility_manual.pdf

Income Guidelines for Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals or Free Milk in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Forms/FreeRed/Income_Guidelines_SNP.pdf

Module 3: Direct Certification of Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program (“Related Resources” section of CSDE’s Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Eligibility-for-Free-and-Reduced-price-Meals-and-Free-Milk-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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Parent/Guardian Notification Letters (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs:

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Eligibility-for-Free-and-Reduced-price-Meals-and-Free-Milk-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ParentGuardianNotificationLetters>

Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Verification-Procedures-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Direct Certification for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, School Health, Nutrition and Family Services, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/DirectCert/Considerations_Direct_Certification_Medicaid.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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