

Important Points 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 as a method of directly certifying children for free or reduced-price meals. This handout summarizes the important points that SFAs must consider when directly certifying children through Medicaid. All personnel involved with the process of certifying applications and conducting verification should review this document.

No Applications

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

Direct Certification Codes

Starting in July 2017, the direct certification list includes the codes below.

FS (SNAP benefits)	Free benefits extend to all children in the household
AF (Temporary Family Assistance)	Free benefits extend to all children in the household
OT (Other, e.g., foster child, homeless, runaway, or Head Start)	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 Children 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, based on National School Lunch Program (NSLP) eligibility policies, is within the limit for free meals (using the NSLP's current income eligibility guidelines). 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](#) on the CSDE's [Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Milk in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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Direct Certification Using Handwritten Case Numbers

Under the Medicaid pilot, children are not considered to be categorically eligible and 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 in order for their child to be eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Negative Impact and Medicaid Determination

Students already certified for free or reduced-price meals 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 the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Temporary Family Assistance supersede a free or reduced status given through Medicaid. However, if a local educational agency (LEA) has determined that a child is directly certified as reduced-price eligible through Medicaid, and the child is determined to be homeless, a runaway, enrolled in a federally funded Head Start Program, or is a foster child; the LEA’s determination supersedes the Medicaid reduced-price status. Children already certified for reduced-price meals through the application process are not changed to full-price meals based on the Medicaid match.

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Increasing the number of direct certifications for **free** school meals via matching with Medicaid has a direct impact on a school’s/district’s identified student percentage (ISP) under the Community Eligibility Provision. 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 3-3 of the Verification Collection Report (FNS 742). Section 3-3 reports the following: “Students directly certified through other programs: Include those directly certified through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or Medicaid (if applicable); those documented as homeless, migrant, runaway, foster, Head Start, Pre-K Even Start, or non-applicant but approved by local officials.” Children identified as RM (Reduced Medicaid) are not reported on the district’s Verification Collection Report at this time.

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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](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/DirectCert/DCMedicaidPoints.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;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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