

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS ABOUT PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

This document highlights important points for local educational agencies (LEAs) when processing free and reduced-price applications for meals and milk in the U. S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. For detailed information, please review the USDA's *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*.

1. LEAs cannot request households to complete separate family applications for each school.
2. The *Sample Parent/Guardian Letter: Frequently Asked Questions About Free and Reduced-price School Meals* must accompany the application form and instruction. For more information, refer to *Important Points for Notifying Parents of a Child's Free and Reduced-price Eligibility*.
3. Eligibility determinations are valid for the entire school year unless the LEA discovers that the application was determined incorrectly, or the status changes due to verification.
4. Residential child care institutions (RCCIs) must refer to the free and reduced-price application materials if day clients are served *and* claimed for free or reduced-price meal reimbursement.
5. If a child is determined to be eligible for free meals/milk because the child is a member of a household receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) or free Medicaid benefits, free eligibility is extended to all children who are members of that household.
6. If a household handwrites a SNAP or TFA number on the application, the determining official must confirm the number before approving the application. This can be done by checking the direct certification list. If the child cannot be confirmed based on the direct certification list, the determining official must contact the adult signer for proof of a SNAP or TFA case number. Refer to the *Procedures for Processing Free and Reduced-price Meal Applications Providing a SNAP/TFA Number* for guidance.
7. All LEAs must use direct certification. The LEA's direct certification contact person is required to access the [Direct Certification Web Application](#) page weekly. The direct certification list provides the names of students enrolled in the district that are directly certified. If a child's name appears in the database *and* the parent/guardian submits a free and reduced-price meal application for this child, direct certification takes precedence over the application (unless the child is directly certified as reduced-price based on Medicaid). The child should be recorded as directly certified and automatically eligible for free meals/milk (or reduced-price meals due to Medicaid, if applicable). All school food authorities (SFAs) are required to notify parents/guardians of their child's direct certification and automatic eligibility for free or reduced-price meal (Medicaid) or free milk benefits. Note that direct certification now includes Medicaid. For more information refer to [Operational Memorandum No. 8-17: Update on the Direct Certification Process and Medicaid](#), [Important Points for Direct Certification with Medicaid](#), and [Steps to Consider When Working with Point-of-service \(POS\) Software Companies](#).

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS ABOUT PROCESSING APPLICATIONS, continued

8. Since foster children are considered categorically eligible, a separate household application is not required. There are several ways that LEAs can determine if a foster child is eligible for free meals/milk:
  - the determining official (the person who approves the free and reduced price meal application) receives from the foster parent, a copy of the legal document or legal court order showing that the child is a foster child;
  - the determining official requests and receives from the board of education or school's main office, a copy of the Department of Children and Family Services 603 form for school year 2018-19, indicating that the child is a foster child;
  - the LEA's foster child Point of Contact provides the determining official with a list (for the current school year) of foster children;
  - the direct certification contact or determining official locates the child's name on the direct certification list; or
  - the foster parent completes a free and reduced-price meal application, and checks off that the child is a foster child. A foster child is categorically eligible for free meals/milk and may be included as a member of the foster family if the foster family also chooses to apply for benefits. If the foster family includes the foster child on their application, the foster child's personal use income must be listed on the application and is part of the total household income. If the foster family is not eligible for free or reduced-price meals or free milk benefits, this does not prevent a foster child from receiving free meal/milk benefits. **Note:** A foster child's free eligibility does **not** automatically extend to all children who are members of a household. For more information regarding foster children, refer to the USDA's *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*.
9. The free and reduced-price meals/milk application must inform households that participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) may be eligible for free or reduced-price meals/milk.
10. Homeless and runaway youth are categorically eligible for free meals/milk; however, their free status does not extend to other children who are members of the household.
11. Privatized military housing allowance is excluded from income eligibility determinations.
12. The SMP must refer to these application materials if free milk is served and claimed. **Note:** The parent letter for the SMP is different from the parent letter for meals/milk. The Media/Press Release for the SMP must only contain the **free** Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEGs).

## IMPORTANT REMINDERS ABOUT PROCESSING APPLICATIONS, continued



For more information, see the USDA's [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#) and the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Milk in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103.

*This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Forms/FreeRed/ProcessingApplications.pdf>.*

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1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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