

# Carryover versus Transfer of a Child’s Meal or Milk Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs

This document summarizes the differences between carryover of a child’s eligibility status and transfer of a child’s eligibility status for the purposes of providing free and reduced-price meals and free milk in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) school nutrition programs. The school nutrition programs include 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



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## Definitions

**Carryover** refers to a child's eligibility from the previous school year being carried over into the new school year.

**Transfer** of eligibility occurs when a child moves to another school during the school year, either from one school to another school within the same local educational agency (LEA) or to a new LEA.

## Carryover of Previous Year's Eligibility

LEAs may carry over a child's eligibility status for the first 30 operating days or until the LEA makes a new eligibility determination for the current school year, whichever comes first. Operating days are the days on which reimbursable meals or milk are provided by a school or another program sponsor.

Carryover allows students to continue receiving school meal or milk benefits while families complete and submit, and schools process, applications. **The carryover period is not intended to delay the processing of applications.**

## Within the LEA

- Carryover of eligibility within a LEA is mandatory, whether a child continues in the same school or will attend a different school within the same LEA. Carryover also applies if the child is directly certified for free or reduced-price meals or free milk.
- If a child is newly enrolled in the LEA but resides in a household where another child (e.g., sibling) was approved through direct certification or through an application in the previous year, carry over the sibling's eligibility for free or reduced-price benefits.
- If a child in kindergarten was enrolled in a federally funded Head Start program under the jurisdiction of the same LEA during the previous school year, carry over the free eligibility.
- If a child attended a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school and moves to a non-CEP school, the LEA may carry over free eligibility for 30 operating days, or until the LEA makes a new eligibility determination for the current school year, whichever comes first.  
**Note:** The CEP refers to a special alternative provision implemented in some schools that allows all students to have meals free of charge. For more information, visit the CSDE's [CEP](#) webpage.

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## Moving to a new LEA

- For children who move to a new LEA, **at the beginning of the new school year or during the summer months**, the new LEA may use the former LEA's eligibility determination from the previous school year and carry over the eligibility status for up to 30 operating days, or until the LEA makes a new determination, whichever comes first. The new LEA may accept the former LEA's eligibility determination during the carryover period without incurring liability for the accuracy of the determination. **Note:** This exception is only for the carryover period at the beginning of the new school year or during the summer.
- When children move from a school participating in the CEP to a non-CEP school in a different LEA **at the beginning of the new school year**, the LEA may carry over free meal eligibility from the CEP school and offer free reimbursable meals for up to 30 operating days, or until the LEA makes a new eligibility determination for the current school year, whichever comes first.

## Transfer of a Child's Eligibility

Unlike carryover, which occurs at the start of a new school year, transfer of eligibility occurs when a child moves to another school during the school year. When a child transfers to another school, the determining official must note the transfer date on the application and the school food authority must update the point of service (POS) to include the new student's information. If the LEA has an application on file and any change occurs after the initial approval for the current school year, the determining official must: 1) note the change; 2) write the date of the change on the application; and 3) implement the change by updating rosters or other methods used at the POS, as necessary.

## When transferring within the LEA

- Eligibility for free and reduced-price meal or free milk benefits must transfer to schools within the same LEA.
- A child transferring within the same LEA from a CEP school to a non-CEP school must be given free reimbursable meals or free milk for up to 30 operating days, or until the LEA makes a new eligibility determination, whichever comes first.

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## When transferring between LEAs

- **New LEA:** When a student transfers to a new LEA, the new LEA is permitted to accept the eligibility determination from the student's former LEA. The USDA strongly encourages LEAs to accept the former LEA's eligibility determination. This helps ease the new student's transition and ensures continued access to free or reduced-price meals or free milk.
  - The new LEA should retain written documentation of the eligibility determination made by the former LEA. An email from the former LEA stating the eligibility status is sufficient.
  - While the new LEA is not liable for the accuracy of the former LEA's determination, the accepting LEA should review the application for arithmetic errors and compare the income and household size to the applicable Income Eligibility Guidelines to ensure that the correct level of benefits was assigned. If the accepting or new LEA determines that an arithmetic error occurred, the accepting LEA must notify the household that they must submit a new application to determine benefits.
- **CEP school to a non-CEP school:** When transferring from a CEP school to a non-CEP school, the LEA may provide free reimbursable meals for up to 30 operating days, or until the LEA makes a new eligibility determination, whichever comes first.

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## Resources

[Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\)](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/community-eligibility-provision) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/community-eligibility-provision>

[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) (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](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/forms/freered/usda_eligibility_manual.pdf) (USDA):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/forms/freered/usda\\_eligibility\\_manual.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/forms/freered/usda_eligibility_manual.pdf)

For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and 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) webpage or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/forms/freered/carryover\\_versus\\_transfer\\_of\\_child\\_eligibility\\_snp.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/forms/freered/carryover_versus_transfer_of_child_eligibility_snp.pdf).

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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: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, 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; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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