


Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs, Summer Food Service Program, and S-EBT

Module 3: Direct Certification



CONNECTICUT
Education

Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs

August 202

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Determining Eligibility Training Modules

Module 1: Introduction to Application Certification and Verification

Module 2: Processing Applications

- Part 1 – Starting the Application Process
- Part 2 – Receiving and Processing Applications
- Part 3 – Reviewing Applications and Special Considerations
- Part 4 – Notification, Documentation, and Final Steps

Module 3: Direct Certification

Module 4: Test Your Knowledge About Processing Applications

Module 5: Confidentiality and Disclosure

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/eligibility-for-free-and-reduced-price-meals-and-free-milk-in-school-nutrition-programs/determining-eligibility-training>

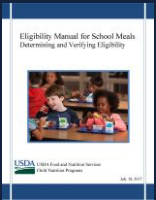
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USDA Resource

USDA's Eligibility Manual for School Meals

Latest version dated July 18, 2017



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/forms/freered/usda_eligibility_manual.pdf

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Topics

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Topics

Introduction to Direct Certification (DC)

Types of DC


Hierarchy of eligibility

CSDE's DC Web Application

Important considerations

Foster children

Records retention



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Introduction to Direct Certification

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Direct Certification

The process of determining children eligible for free or reduced-price meals or free milk based on documentation obtained directly from appropriate state or local agencies or other authorized individuals

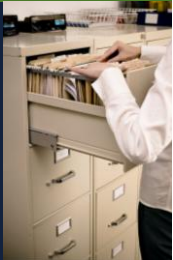
Terms to Know

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Communication for Direct Certification

- In most cases, does not involve household (HH)
- Communication should be between applicable state agency/program or other authorized individuals, and the local educational agency (LEA)




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Directly Certified Children

- Not required to submit application
- Not selected for verification
- Eligible for free or reduced-price benefits for entire school year (SY)



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Categorical Eligibility

A child is automatically eligible for free or reduced-price meals or free milk

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Conferring Categorical Eligibility

- Two situations



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Situation 1 to Confer Categorical Eligibility

- Child or another HH member receives assistance program benefits
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Temporary Family Assistance (TFA)
- Free benefits extend to all children in HH




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Situation 2 to Confer Categorical Eligibility

- Child determined individually eligible through Other Source Categorical Eligibility designation
 - Application process
 - DC
- Free benefits do not extend to all children in HH



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Other Source Categorical Eligibility



Terms to Know


1. Children enrolled in federal Head Start Program or state-funded pre-kindergarten with identical or more stringent eligibility criteria than Head Start
2. Homeless or runaway children
3. Foster children

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Other Source Categorical Eligibility

- Homeless, runaway, or Head Start children are other source categorically eligible
 - Considered directly certified if programs officials provide lists of eligible participants
 - Free eligibility does not extend to other children in HH




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Other Source Categorical Eligibility

- If child is homeless, runaway, or in a Head Start program, determining official (DO) must confirm child's status
- Does not apply to foster children



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Determining Foster Children's Eligibility for Free Meals or Milk in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsfp/forms/freered/foster_children_eligibility_snp_sfsp.pdf

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Mixed Households

Households that include children who are Other Source Categorically Eligible and children who are not

- Same HH could have two different eligibility determinations

Terms to Know

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Types of Direct Certification

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Five Types of Direct Certification for Students

1. CSDE's DC/S-EBT list

2. List of local educational agency's (LEA) homeless or runaway students

3. List of LEA's students enrolled in Head Start students (or state-funded program with more stringent income requirements)

4. List of LEA's foster children

5. Eligible for Medicaid on CSDE's DC/S-EBT List

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DC Method 1: CSDE's DC/S-EBT List

Code	Student's status	Extension of eligibility
FS	SNAP benefits	Free: all children in HH
AF	Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) benefits	Free: all children in HH
OT (Other)	Foster child *	None


* Does not include homeless, runaway, and Head Start

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DC Method 1: CSDE's DC List

- DO must keep track of different codes for verification and audit purposes



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DC Method 2: List of LEA's Homeless or Runaway Students

- Must be signed and dated by LEA's homeless liaison
- May receive list by secure email
- Set up communication process between homeless liaison and DO to identify homeless students

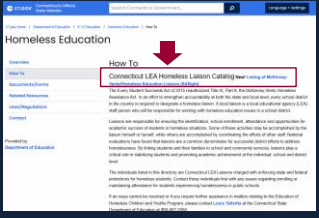


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Connecticut LEA Homeless Liaison Catalog




<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/homeless/homeless-education/how-to>

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DC Method 3: List of Students Enrolled in Head Start or State-funded Program with More Stringent Income Requirements

- Must be signed and dated by director of LEA's federally funded Head Start Program/other state-funded program
- May send by secure email




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DC Method 4: LEA's List of Foster Children

- Must be signed and dated by LEA's foster care point of contact
- Not subject to verification
- Free benefits do not extend to other children in HH




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DC Method 5: Eligible for Medicaid on CSDE's DC List

- Directly certifies children for free or reduced-price meals and free milk
- Not all children who qualify for Medicaid are directly certified for free or reduced-priced benefits
 - Must be on direct certification/S-EBT list




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Medicaid Eligible Students

Student's code on DC/S-EBT list	Benefits
FM – Free Medicaid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free eligibility• Extends to all children in HH
RM – Reduced Medicaid	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced-price eligibility• Extends to all children in HH

- Must track different codes for verification and audit purposes




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Reduced-price Eligibility through Medicaid

- Could also be eligible for free meals through HH application
- Reduced Medicaid status cannot negatively impact eligibility if determined free eligible
- Determination of free eligible supersedes reduced Medicaid




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Medicaid and Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Medicaid students	Count toward CEP Identified Student Percentage (ISP)
Free	Yes
Reduced	No




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Considerations for Direct Certification with Husky A (Medicaid)



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/directcert/considerations_direct_certification_medicaid.pdf

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Hierarchy of Eligibility

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Hierarchy of Eligibility

- Requires considerations when point-of-sale software is allowed to override an eligibility determination




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Hierarchy of Eligibility

- Eligibility for SNAP benefits (FS) supersedes all other eligibility categories
- Medicaid match should never overlay existing DC match with another allowable program category, e.g., SNAP, TFA, OT
- LEAs must identify Medicaid match only when child does not match with SNAP, TFA, or OT



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Hierarchy of Eligibility: Example 1

- Student categorized as RM (Reduced Medicaid)
 - Student's eligibility changes to AF
- Latest DC file categorizes student as AF
 - Free benefits extend to all children in HH

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Hierarchy of Eligibility: Example 2

1. Student's name appears twice on DC list

▪ Give student highest benefit

• SNAP (FS)

• Reduced Medicaid (RM)

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Summary of Hierarchy of Eligibility

Hierarchy	Code	Benefits
1	FS = SNAP	<div>• Free eligibility</div> <div>• Extends to all children in HH</div>
2	AF = Temporary Family Assistance (TFA)	<div>• Free eligibility</div> <div>• Extends to all children in HH</div>
3	OT = Other (foster children)	<div>• Free eligibility</div> <div>• Does not extend to all children in HH</div>
4	FM = free Medicaid	<div>• Free eligibility</div> <div>• Extends to all children in HH</div>
5	RM = reduced Medicaid	<div>• Reduced-price eligibility</div> <div>• Extends to all children in HH</div>

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



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/directcert/direct_certification_medicaid_steps_pos_software.pdf

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Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program (S-EBT)

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S-EBT Starting School Year 2025-26

▪ Students eligible for free and reduced-price meals are on direct certification/S-EBT list

• FE = free benefits

• RE = reduced=price benefits

▪ Not directly certified

▪ Not subject to verification



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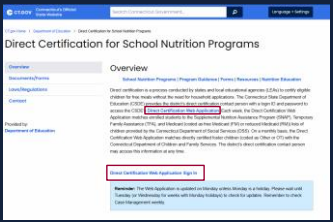


DC Web Application

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Accessing DC Web Application

CSDE's Direct Certification for School Nutrition Programs webpage



<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/direct-certification>


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DC Contact

Each LEA designates one DC contact who can access DC list

Due to confidentiality, only one DC contact per LEA



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Updates to DC List

Every Monday (or Tuesday if Monday is a holiday)

CSDE matches student enrollment with DSS SNAP/TFA/Medicaid/foster benefits

DC contacts must access list weekly to ensure children are awarded free or reduced benefits accurately and timely



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Check Case Management Weekly



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Check Case Management Weekly

Click the "Details" link below to view the details of the ticket.

Number of Direct Certification records needing review: 25

Direct Certification

Select	Child ID	First Name	Last Name	MI	DOB	Street Address	City	Town Code	Alt Num	Benefit Source
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1234567	Any	Child	X	5/4/2006	123 ABC Street	XYZ Town	1234	0000000000	RM

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Check Case Management Weekly

Details

If the Benefit Source Record is for one of the possible student matches from your district's PSIS Registration data, check the checkbox for the matching student and click **Save Match**.

If the Benefit Source Record is not for a possible matching student in your district, check the checkbox for the incorrect possible match and click **No Match**.

A green background for a possible match means that it has already been either marked as not a match or claimed as this Benefit Source Record.

Child Number	First Name	Last Name	MI	DOB	Street Address	City	Benefit Source
1234567	Any	Child	X	5/4/2006	123 ABC Street	XYZ Town	RM

PSIS Possible Match

Child Number	First Name	Last Name	MI	DOB	Street Address	City	Benefit Source		
000000	98	00	123456	Any	Child	X	5/4/2006	ABC High	XYZ Town

Match

No Match

No Match

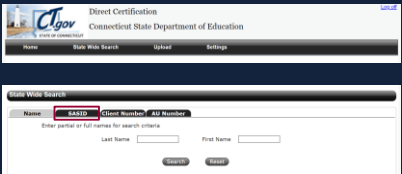
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Use Statewide Search to Find Students

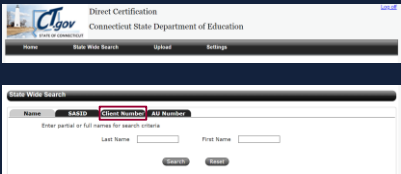


■ SASID Number = State Assigned Student Identifier

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Use Statewide Search to Find Students

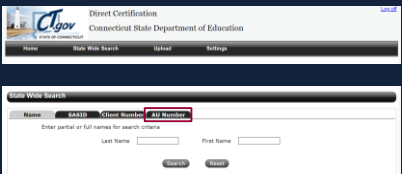


■ Client Number = 9-digit number assigned by Department of Social Services (DSS)

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Use Statewide Search to Find Students

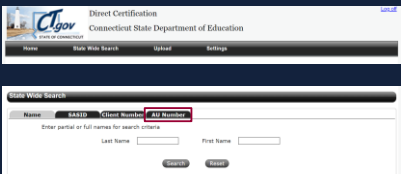


■ AU number = unique number for a household

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Use Statewide Search to Find Students




■ Only data from SNAP and TFA contain AU numbers

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Use Statewide Search to Find Students

- Take screen shot of match
- Print for audit purposes



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DC Web Application
Process for Private Schools

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DC Web Application Process for Private Schools

- Different DC upload process

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Direct Certification Upload Process for Private Schools

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/directcert/direct_certification_upload_private_schools.pdf

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DC Web Application Process for Private Schools

- Must use Excel Student Information Template

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Student Information Template for Private Schools

File name: StudentInformation_Template_v1(1).csv

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DC Web Application Process for Private Schools

- May also use Statewide Search

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CSDE Webpage

Direct Certification for School Nutrition Programs

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/direct-certification/documents>

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Questions

DC Web Application

Help Desk
860-713-6681

CSDE's CNP System

CSDE school nutrition
consultant

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CNstaff/countyassign.pdf>

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Important Considerations

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Important Considerations

- Notifying households
- Refusing benefits
- Carryover of DC eligibility
- Entering DC data
- Applications for directly certified students




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Notifying Households

- Must notify HH in writing anytime LEA approves free/reduced-price benefits
 - Includes approvals based on DC
- Use CSDE parent/guardian letters
- More information in Module 2 Part 4 – Notification, Documentation, and Final Steps




<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/eligibility-for-free-and-reduced-price-meals-and-free-milk-in-school-nutrition-programs/parent-and-guardian-notification-letters>

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Refusing Benefits

- HH qualifies for free or reduced-price meals, but parent/guardian wants to pay full or reduced price
- HH has right to refuse eligibility benefit
- Document request and claim meals as applicable




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Important Reminders for
Completing Direct Certification




https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/directcert/important_reminders_completing_direct_certification.pdf

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Carryover of Eligibility

- Student’s eligibility from previous SY being carried over into current or new SY
- First direct certification match in August




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Carryover of Eligibility

- 30 operating days from first day of school **OR**
- Until name appears on new SY’s DC list before end of carryover
- Status changes to denied if not listed on new SY’s direct certification/S-EBT list by end of 30 operating days



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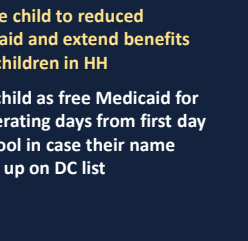
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Carryover Quiz

- June: Directly certified as **free Medicaid**
- August: DC list as **reduced Medicaid**

A. Change child to **reduced Medicaid** and extend benefits to all children in HH

B. Keep child as free Medicaid for 30 operating days from first day of school in case their name shows up on DC list




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Entering DC Data

- Accuracy is only as good as
 - Public School Information System (PSIS) information
 - Information provided by parent/guardian on DSS application for SNAP, TFA, or Medicaid benefits




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Entering DC Data for Interschool Agreements

- Must include students in direct certification process to ensure eligible students are directly certified accordingly




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Entering DC Data for Enrollment

- Communicate with LEA’s enrollment person regarding when enrollment will be updated in state’s PSIS
- Update by July 1 annually
- Date impacts number of students who are directly certified




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Entering DC Data for Enrollment

- Match total enrollment with DC/S-EBT list every week
- **Helps ensure**
 - all potential directly certified students are matched
 - students do not charge meals when eligible for free meals based on DC



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Applications for Directly Certified Child

- If HH submits application for directly certified child, disregard unless
 - application approved for free meals **and**
 - DC shows reduced Medicaid eligibility
- Note changes on application and keep on file



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Applications for Directly Certified Child

- DC supersedes all application determinations



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Direct Certification
of Foster Children

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Methods to Determine Foster Child's Eligibility for Free Meals

1. HH submits application
2. Direct certification
 - OT on DC list **OR**
 - DCF 603 form **OR**
 - List of foster children from LEA's foster care point of contact




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Three Ways to be Eligible with Method 2: Direct Certification of Foster Child

1. Name appears as OT on DC list
2. DO obtains copy of current SY DCF 603 form
3. LEA Point of Contact provides DO with list of foster children



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Records Retention


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Records Retention

- 7 CFR 210.23(c) of NSLP regulations
- 7 CFR 220.7(e)(13) of SBP regulations

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210#p-210.23\(c\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210#p-210.23(c))
[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-220#p-220.13\(b\)\(1\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-220#p-220.13(b)(1))




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Records Retention

Documentation	Timeframe
All records to support claim	3 years after submission date of final claim for fiscal year
Records with unresolved audit findings	Beyond 3 years, as long as required to resolve audit issues




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Records Retention

- Special Provision schools (e.g., CEP) must keep all data to support base year or Identified Student Percentage (ISP) data
- Check with board of education/town to determine if records retention requirements are more stringent



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Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/adminrev/records_retention_snp.pdf

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Questions? Contact School Nutrition Programs Staff

County	Staff
Middlesex County (includes Regions 4, 13, and 17) Tolland County (includes Regions 8 and 19)	Jennifer Bove 860-807-2044 • jennifer.bove@ct.gov
Fairfield County (includes Region 9) Litchfield County (includes Regions 1, 7, 12, 14, and 20)	Fionnuala Brown 860-807-2129 • fionnuala.brown@ct.gov
Hartford County (includes Region 10)	Teri Dandeneau 860-807-2079 • teri.dandeneau@ct.gov
New Haven County (includes Regions 5, 15, and 16)	Greg King 860-713-6804 • greg.king@ct.gov
New London County Windham County (includes Region 11)	Susan Alston 860-807-2081 • susan.alston@ct.gov

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cnstaff/countyassign.pdf>


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Knowledge Check for
Module 3: Direct
Certification

DC or Not DC



Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs, Summer Food Service Program, and S-EBT

Knowledge Check for Module 3: Direct Certification

DC or Not DC

Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/eligibility-for-free-and-reduced-price-meals-and-free-milk-in-school-nutrition-programs/determining-eligibility-training>

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Thanks for participating!



<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/eligibility-for-free-and-reduced-price-meals-and-free-milk-in-school-nutrition-programs/determining-eligibility-training>

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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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