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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

August 18, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents and Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Michael Radke, Director 
Office of Field Services

SUBJECT: October 2011 Counts of Membership Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals

The October 2011 free eligible count data collection will take place in Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). This packet contains materials needed to document income eligibility of certain children if your district/academy chooses not to participate in the National School Meals Program for the 2011-12 school year. You may disregard this request if your district/academy already participates in the collection process with the National School Meals Program through the Child Nutrition Program.

Children who are enrolled in your school district or public school academy on October 05, 2011, and whose family income is at or below the criteria identified on the attached chart (Enclosure 2) may qualify your district/academy for additional state and federal funding such as Section 31a, At-Risk and/or Title I. In order to qualify to receive such funding, it is necessary to document the income eligibility of these children and report them in the Supplemental Nutrition Eligibility (SNE) Collection.

Please reprint the attached sample letter (Enclosure 1) on your district/academy letterhead and distribute it along with the application for "Determination of Eligibility for Title I and Section 31a, At-Risk Funding" (Enclosure 2) to all students/families in your district/academy. Only those families meeting the income criteria given in the chart, "2011-12 Income Eligibility Guidelines for Free Meals," should complete and return the application. Assistance for determining eligibility can be found in the "Eligibility Guidance for School Meals Manual" at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Guidance/eligibility_guidance.pdf.

An additional resource that can be used for determining eligibility is the Direct Certification Report (DCR). Direct certification is the process of certifying for free school meals those students who are members of households receiving assistance

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under the Food Stamp Program administered by the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS). The DCR matches data from DHS with student enrollment data reported by the school district/academy in the new Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). Students already identified by the state as eligible on the DCR do not need to return Enclosure 2 to their district/academy, since the district/academy can use the DCR to include these students in their SNE collection.

Students who meet the eligibility guidelines and are enrolled on October 05, 2011, must be reported in the SNE Collection. Once you have determined the total number of free eligible children enrolled in your district/academy on October 05 2011, you have until November 23, 2011, to validate, modify, and certify your data in the MSDS.

Additional information on direct certification and the MSDS are available on the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) website at www.michigan.gov/cepi. Any questions about submitting information in MSDS should be emailed to CEPI Customer Support at cepi@michigan.gov or call 517-335-0505 and follow the prompts. The free eligible counts that are submitted through MSDS will be used to determine allocations under Section 31a of the State School Aid Act, as well as the statewide counts needed for allocations under The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

If you have any questions about Enclosure 1 and/or Enclosure 2, please contact Lisa Simmer, Office of Field Services at 517-373-4006 or SimmerL@michigan.gov.

Enclosures