



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**FOOD SERVICE**

**ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY NO. 3  
SCHOOL YEAR 2016-2017**

**SUBJECT: Guidance for Direct Certification Requirements for Public and Nonpublic Schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs**

**DATE: August 1, 2016**

The Direct Certification Report lists students that are automatically certified as eligible for free school meals. Each Local Education Agency (LEA) must notify households with matched students that they are eligible for free school meals and no further application is necessary. If the household wants to decline the free school meals benefit, they must notify the school.

The Direct Certification Report is available for all school districts, including nonpublic schools, through the ***Michigan Student Data System (MSDS)***. The Direct Certification Report matches student enrollment data that LEAs upload to the MSDS with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participant data, as well as Foster Child data from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). The following information applies to other students living in the same household as the student on the Direct Certification Report:

- **SNAP:** Benefits can be extended to other children in the same household.
- **TANF:** Benefits can be extended to other children in the same household.
- **Foster Child Program:** Benefits cannot be extended to other students in the same household. However, foster children may be included on the family application to increase the number of household members which may increase the likelihood of receiving free or reduced price meal benefits.

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**Frequency of the Direct Certification Report:**

[The Center for Educational Performance and Information \(CEPI\) website](#)<sup>i</sup> lists the Direct Certification Report refresh dates. Click on Calendar within the menu on the left hand side of the screen to access the CEPI Master Calendar.

The Frequency of Direct Certification Matching Activities is specified in the [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Food and Nutrition Service Memorandum SP31-2011](#)<sup>ii</sup>. The Direct Certification Report must be accessed a minimum of three times during the school year as follows:

- at or around the beginning of the school year
- three months after the initial effort
- six months after the initial effort

The Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) refreshes the Direct Certification report monthly. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) strongly encourages schools to pull the Direct Certification Report monthly to ensure all eligible students are receiving proper meal benefits.

Direct Certification is closely tied to the School Food Authority Verification Collection Report (SFA-VCR). The second refresh of the Direct Certification report in October 2016 is the report to use to accurately complete Section 3 of the SFA-VCR. The Direct Certification Report will be refreshed two times in October 2016; at or around the beginning of the month and toward the end of the month.

Nonpublic schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) cannot access the Direct Certification Report until student enrollment data is uploaded to the MSDS.

**The [CEPI website](#) has the most current Direct Certification information for Public and Nonpublic schools:**

- There are step by step directions to obtain a Single Sign-On (SSO) User login to access the Direct Certification Report and Application Security Forms:
  - *Click on **CEPI Applications** within the menu on the left side of the screen on the [CEPI website](#). There are two drop down menus with the following information:*
    - ✓ **Manuals**
      - Single Sign-On User Guide
    - ✓ **Help and Training**
      - Verify Your CEPI Authorized Users
      - Application Security Forms

**For all other information pertaining to the Direct Certification Report:**

*Click on the **Michigan Student Data System** within the menu on the left side of the screen on the [CEPI website](#). There are three drop down menus with the following information:*

- ✓ **Manuals**
  - MSDS Nonpublic User Guide
- ✓ **Help and Training**
  - Direct Certification Report FAQs
  - USDA Memo on Frequency of Direct Certification Activities
  - Sample Eligibility Notification Letter
  - September 2009 Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household
- ✓ **Technical Material**
  - Direct Certification Report Format

**For more information specific to Nonpublic Schools on the [CEPI website](#):**

*Click on **Nonpublic Schools** within the menu on the left side of the screen on the CEPI website to access the **Non-Public Schools User Guide**.*

The [MDE School Nutrition Programs website](#)<sup>iii</sup> includes details about Direct Certification under the Guidance Section. The *Eligibility Guidance for School Meals Manual* is available on the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service website at the following link:

[Eligibility Manual for School Meals Determining and Verifying Eligibility](#)<sup>iv</sup>

Questions regarding the technical MSDS computer applications may be directed to CEPI customer support by e-mail to [cepi@michigan.gov](mailto:cepi@michigan.gov) or phone 517-335-0505 by selecting option 3.

Questions regarding the NSLP Direct Certification requirement may be directed to the School Nutrition Programs unit by e-mail to [MDE-schoolnutrition@michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-schoolnutrition@michigan.gov) or phone 517-373-3347.

Questions regarding this policy memo may be directed to Lisa Taylor, MS, RDN, School District Consultant, at [browntaylorl@michigan.gov](mailto:browntaylorl@michigan.gov).

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<sup>i</sup> [www.michigan.gov/cepi](http://www.michigan.gov/cepi)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP31-2011.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> [www.michigan.gov/schoolnutrition](http://www.michigan.gov/schoolnutrition)

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/2015-edition-eligibility-manual-school-meals>