

FUNDAMENTALS OF DIRECT CERTIFICATION AND VERIFICATION REPORTING

*School Nutrition Programs
Office of School Support Services*

DIRECT CERTIFICATION

SCHOOL YEAR 2014-2015

Objectives

- Understand the Requirements for Direct Certification
- Understand how data from the Department of Human Services (DHS) is matched with student enrollment data from the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS)
- Locate available resources to access the Direct Certification Report

Why directly certify students?

- Reduce the burden of school lunch applications for households and school districts.
- Improve the accuracy of eligibility determinations.
- Increase the number of eligible children certified for benefits.
- Provide accurate information to potentially use for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

Direct Certification Report

- The Direct Certification Report matches student enrollment data that LEAs upload to the MSDS with Food Assistance Program (FAP) and Family Independence Program (FIP) participant data, as well as Foster Children data from Michigan Department of Human Services.
- Access to the Direct Certification Report is through the MSDS.
- Students on the Direct Certification Report are automatically certified as eligible for free school meals.

Student Search Feature

- The Student Search feature for the Direct Certification Report can be used to:
 - Look up individual enrolled students that have been directly certified
 - Look up students who are directly certified without being enrolled in their district
 - Search by UIC or core fields
- This feature allows quick response back to families that are new enrollees in between report refreshes.

Direct Certification Report Format

The Eligibility Category column includes students that are certified via:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Michigan: SNAP = FAP (Food Assistance Program)
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
 - Michigan: TANF = FIP (Family Independence Program)
- Foster Children

Eligibility Category Column Example

Each Student will only have **one** designation in the eligibility category column.

- If a student is a foster child **and** receives SNAP benefits, the designation will be for SNAP.
 - ✓ *Note: other children in the family do not have benefits extended to them, but the family may include the foster child as part of the household to increase household size.*
- For students that are certified via SNAP or TANF, eligibility **can** be extended to additional children in the household.
- Students will be designated with a "S" SNAP, "T" TANF, or "F" Foster.

Direct Certification Report Format continued . . .

The Exit Date column:

- Identifies any student the district reported as exited.
- Identifies and filters out students that were enrolled in the district and left during the school year.

Sample of the Direct Certification Report

To review a sample of the Direct Certification Report

Go to <http://www.michigan.gov/cepi>

1. Click on the following from the left navigation menu:
 - ✓CEPI Applications
 - ✓Michigan Student Data System
 - ✓Direct Certification Report
2. Click on Direct Certification Report Format located in the Direct Certification Help section to the right of the navigation menu.

Direct Certification Enrollment

- The EOY and Early Roster Collections are the district's "expected enrollment."
- Once the Fall General Collections are submitted and certified, CEPI has the district's "true enrollment."
- For the remainder of the school year the report is supplemented with:
 - School Record Maintenance (SRM)
 - Spring enrollment records

Direct Certification Report Process

August 1 - November 1

- Match students that were submitted as continuing in the following collections:
 - EOY General Collection
 - Early Roster - optional (until September 18, 2014)
 - SRM - optional

Direct Certification Report Refresh

Beginning with the December report refresh:

- Refresh the report and display only students submitted as continuing in the following collections:
 - Fall 2014 General Collection
 - SRM - optional
 - Spring 2015 General
- The match date on the Direct Certification Report for students that were matched based on EOY or Early Roster will change if the match was based on:
 - General Collection **or**
 - SRM Collection

Direct Certification Report Process continued...

Non-Public Schools:

- Will continue to report their entire student enrollment in the Early Roster Collection throughout the school year.
- For more information a PowerPoint presentation for non-public schools is included in the handouts.

http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-986_50502_53828--,00.html

Direct Certification Help

- MISDS Nonpublic User Guide [PDF](#)
- Direct Certification Report Format [PDF](#)
- 2014-2015 Direct Certification Timeline [PDF](#)
- Sample Eligibility Notification Letter [PDF](#)
- Direct Certification Report FAQs [PDF](#)
- Nonpublic Schools Security Agreement (Direct Cert.) [PDF](#)

Official Communications

- USDA Memo on Frequency of Direct Certification Activities [PDF](#)
- September 2009 Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household [PDF](#)

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Direct Certification Help

- Go to <http://www.michigan.gov/cepi>
- Click on “CEPI Applications” (left hand bar)
- Click on “Michigan Student Data System”
- Click on “Single Sign-On User’s Guide” (under the Security section)
- Follow step-by-step instructions

Security

- [MSDS Security Agreement PDF](#)
- [Nonpublic Schools Security Agreement \(Direct Cert.\) PDF](#)
- [Single Sign-On User’s Guide PDF](#) 

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CEPI Customer Support

For more information about the Direct Certification Report go to:
http://www.michigan.gov/cepi/0,4546,7-113-986_50502_53828---,00.html

Questions regarding Direct Certification technical assistance may be directed to the CEPI customer support by:

- E-mail: CEPI@michigan.gov or
- Phone: (517) 335-0505 and select option 3

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Additional Information

Questions regarding the NSLP Direct Certification requirement may be directed to the School Nutrition Programs unit by:

- E-mail: MDE-schoolnutrition@michigan.gov
- Phone: (517) 373-3347

For more information, go to:

- www.michigan.gov/schoolnutrition
- Scroll down to **Guidance**
- Click on **Direct Certification**

Questions?



VERIFICATION REPORTING

*School Food Authority
Verification Collection Report
SFA-VCR 2014-2015*

What is Verification?

Verification is:

- Confirmation of eligibility for free and reduced price meals under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.
- Only required when eligibility is determined through the application process, not through direct certification.

What does Verification Include?

Verification must Include:

- Confirmation of income eligibility
or
- Confirmation that the child or any member of the household is receiving assistance under SNAP, FDPIR or TANF
or
- That a child is Other Source Categorically Eligible

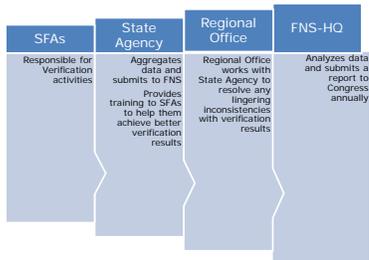
Verification can also:

- Include confirmation of any other information required on the application, such as household size.

Where is Verification Data Used?

- State Agency's direct certification rate;
- Improper payment reports;
- Non-Response Rate;
- Office of Policy Support (OPS) studies

Roles in the Verification Process



Key Verification Dates

- October 1: School Food Authorities (SFAs) determine the total number of applications on file for the current school year as of October 1.
- October 31: SFAs determine the total number of students enrolled for the current school year as of this date.
- November 15: SFAs complete verification activities.



February 1: SFAs report verification results to the State Agency (SA) The Michigan Department of Education (MDE)

- March 15: SAs submit complied SFA results to FNS
- March-June: FNS reviews data and follows up with SA

Verification Reporting

- **Verification results should be reported to the SA no later than February 1st.**
- **Information about Verification is located :**
 - ✓ In the Eligibility Manual for School Meals Part 9
 - ✓ The newest addition is August 2014. On the School Meals Website www.michigan.gov/schoolnutrition
 - ✓ In the Guidance section on the website under **Steps to Complete Verification**
 - ✓ In the Administrative Memorandum section updated annually and emailed to SFAs
 - ✓ In Weekly News reminders emailed to SFAs
- **Please make sure the contact information in MEGs+ is correct.**

SFA-VCR formerly known as LEARS



Beginning in school year 2013-2014 the Verification Report was changed to:

School Food Authority Verification Collection Report (SFA-VCR)

The report must be accessed through the Michigan Nutrition Data System MIND using your MEIS login and password.

Changes to SFA-VCR

- Residential Child Care Institutions are required to report
- Community Eligibility Provision Schools are required to report
- Many of the sections are prepopulated from the October claim and CEPI data
- If you are a SFA with all CEP schools or a RCCI *without* non-residential students you are not subject to verification and will only complete certain sections.
- The SFAs with applications will report verification similar to the previous report
- The exception is reporting Direct Certification numbers.
- Direct Certification is separated by **SNAP in 3-2 B** and **other programs including TANF and Foster in 3-3 B.**

Independent Review of Applications

- **Required when:**
 1. 10% or more of certification/benefit issuance statuses in error during an Administrative Review (SFA-2 form); **OR**
 2. State-determined criterion (TBD; USDA recommends 5-10% error rate)
- **Second reviewer:** Must conduct independent review of initial eligibility determinations for free and reduced applications.
- **Required:** Independent review of applications by a second reviewer before households are notified (doesn't need to be district employee) (memos SP 44-2014 and SP 62-2014):

Steps to Complete Verification

- The "Steps to Complete Verification" contains every document needed for the verification process.
- **Step One does not apply to all SFAs**
 - ✓ Check to see if your SFA is on the Independent Review List
- **Check to see if your SFA is required to complete an improvement plan.**
 - ✓ Check to see if your SFA is required to use Standard Sample size
 - ✓ Follow the instructions for the sampling methods
 - ✓ Establish the Free and Reduced Price School Application Pool
 - ✓ SFAs with an electronic Point of Service (POS) do not have to conduct a Confirmation Review
 - ✓ If the SFA *does not* have an electronic POS then a Confirmation Review is required

Verification Sample

- Sample Size means the number of applications subject to verification.
 - **The minimum and maximum = 3%**
- Sample Pool is the total number of applications approved as of October 1.
- Random Sampling means each application has an equal chance of being selected.

Verification Sampling

During the previous school year, if less than 80% of the applications selected for verification did not respond:

- **Standard Sample Size (Basic Sampling)**

During the previous school year, if more than 80% of the applications selected for verification responded:

- **Standard Sample Size (Basic Sampling)**
- **Alternate One Sample Size (Random Sampling)**
- **Alternate Two Sample Size (Error Prone Sampling)**

Sampling Methods and Direct Certification

- Children that are directly certified for free meals, do not need to be verified.
- Do not include in total number to determine the number or applications to verify.
- Children that are documented as migrant, runaway, homeless, foster, and children participating in Head Start/Even Start are exempt from verification
- Children in RCCIs except for applications for any non-residential students attending the institution
- Schools that **only** participate in the SMP
- School participating in the Community Eligibility Provision

Sampling Methods and Direct Certification

- If a student in the household is on the direct certification list then all students in the household are directly certified and categorically eligible for free meals.
- These households are not subject to verification.

Verification for Cause

- With the exception of verification for cause, SFAs must not verify more than or less than the standard sample size or the alternate sample size.
- The SFA has an obligation to verify all questionable applications such as applications with zero income. The same process of sending letters, notifications, etc. apply.
- Do not verify 100% of the applications
- Verification for cause is done in addition to the required sample size and these applications cannot be used as part of the sample.

Standard Sample Size (Basic Sampling)

- The required sample size is 3% or 3,000, whichever is less of all approved applications on file on October 1.
- Count the total number of approved applications (SNAP, foster children, income-based) on file on October 1.
- Multiply the total number of approved applications by 3% (.03).
 - Round up
 - At least one application must be verified

Standard Sample Size (Basic Sampling)

- Separate out all income-based, error-prone applications reporting monthly household income within \$100 or annual household income within \$1,200 of the free or reduced price eligibility limit.
- The 3% sample should come from error-prone applications.
- If there are not enough error-prone applications to meet the sample size requirements, additional applications must be selected at random from other income-based approved applications.

Error Prone Applications

- Applications within \$100.00 per month or \$1200 annually of the applicable Income Eligibility Guideline.
- Error Prone replaces the term "Focused Sample"

Income Eligibility Guidelines for Use in Schools
(This form is for school personnel use only.)

Family income criteria to be used for the 2014-2015 school year for School Lunch, School Breakfast, or Special Milk Programs.

Total Family Size	A. Scale for Free Meals or Free Milk				B. Scale for Reduced Price Meals					
	Annual	Monthly	Two per Month	Every Two Weeks	Annual	Monthly	Two per Month	Every Two Weeks		
1	\$15,175	\$1,265	\$633	\$504	\$292	\$21,590	\$1,800	\$900	\$831	\$416
2	\$20,449	\$1,705	\$853	\$787	\$394	\$29,101	\$2,426	\$1,213	\$1,130	\$560
3	\$25,723	\$2,144	\$1,072	\$990	\$495	\$36,612	\$3,051	\$1,526	\$1,409	\$705
4	\$31,005	\$2,584	\$1,292	\$1,193	\$597	\$44,123	\$3,677	\$1,839	\$1,698	\$849
5	\$36,283	\$3,024	\$1,512	\$1,396	\$698	\$51,634	\$4,303	\$2,152	\$1,986	\$993
6	\$41,561	\$3,464	\$1,732	\$1,599	\$800	\$59,145	\$4,929	\$2,465	\$2,275	\$1,138
7	\$46,839	\$3,904	\$1,952	\$1,802	\$901	\$66,656	\$5,555	\$2,778	\$2,564	\$1,282
8	\$52,117	\$4,344	\$2,172	\$2,005	\$1,003	\$74,167	\$6,181	\$3,091	\$2,853	\$1,427
	\$5,278*	\$440*	\$220*	\$203*	\$102*	\$7,511*	\$620*	\$313*	\$280*	\$140*

*For each additional household member add this amount.

Example: Standard Sample Size (Basic Sampling)

1,300 total applications x .03 = 39 applications

Example Scenario #1

- 445 error-prone applications.
- All 39 applications would be selected just from the 445 error-prone applications.

Example Scenario #2

- 25 error-prone applications.
- All 25 error-prone applications, plus 14 applications randomly selected from income-eligible applications.

**Alternate One Sample Size
(Random Sampling)**

- The required sample size is 3% or 3,000, whichever is less of all approved applications on file on October 1.
- Count the total number of approved applications (SNAP, foster children, income-based) on file on October 1.
- Note if a child appears on the direct certification list by Oct 31, count them as directly certified and not as part of the application sample pool.
- Multiply the total number of approved applications by 3% (.03).
 - Round up
 - At least one application must be verified

**Example: Alternate One Sample Size
(Random Sampling)**

340 total applications x .03 = 10.2 applications.

Round up to 11 applications

**Alternate Two Sample Size
(Error Prone Sampling)**

Must verify a minimum of:

- The lesser of 1% or 1,000 of the total number of approved applications (both income and categorical). The 1% sample is selected from income applications with total household income within \$100 monthly or \$1,200 annually of the income eligibility guidelines (IEGs) for free and reduced price meals for that size household.

Alternate Two Sample Size (Error Prone Sampling)

Plus:

- The lesser of one-half (0.5%) of 1% or 500 of the total number of applications that were approved based on categorical eligibility, selected from applications with a SNAP or FIP number.

Example: Alternate Two Sample Size (Error Prone Sampling)

300 income applications

200 categorical applications

500 total applications in the application pool

500 total applications x.01 = 5

200 categorical applications x.005 = 1

Total Sample 6

Example: Alternate Two Sample Size (Error Prone Sampling)

- A sample of 5 applications must be selected from income applications with total household income within \$100 monthly or \$1,200 annually of the income eligibility guidelines (IEGs) for free and reduced priced meals for the size household;

Plus:

- 1 from the 200 categorical applications that provided a SNAP/FIP case number in lieu of income on the application.

Verification Sampling

How do I randomly select the required number of applications as determined in Basic, Alternate One, and Alternate Two sampling methods?

Selection Methods:

- Selection interval, or
- Put all applications in a container and draw out the number of applications needed to equal 3%.

Selection Interval

700 total applications x.03 =21 applications for verification

700 total application/21 applications for verification = 33

Choose every 33rd application until 21 applications are pulled from the 700.

Steps to Complete Verification

- ✓If an application with a FAP or FIP case number is selected the forms for contacting the Department of Human Services (DHS) are provided. The household can provide you with an official letter from DHS.
- ✓Conduct a Follow-up Review for any household that has not responded by the original due date and document results
- ✓Notify all households of final determination using the "We have Checked Your Application" form.
- ✓Households must be given a 10 day advance written notice for any changes in eligibility.
- ✓Make changes to the benefit issuance documentation by November 15th

Steps to Complete Verification

- ✓ Complete all required Verification documents Worksheets and Check Lists
- ✓ Complete the Verification Reporting System (the old LEARs report)
- ✓ Keep all this documentation for 3 years including the current year.
- ✓ Plan ahead and organize this information for the administrative review

SFA VCR Section 1

The report is certified on 2/19/2014 @ 2:23:02 AM

SFA Type: # Public; 0 Private

Section 1: Total Schools, Residential Child Care Institutions(RCCIs) and Enrolled Students
 All SFAs must report Section 1

	A. Number of Schools or Institutions	B. Number of Students
1-1. Total Schools (Do not include RCCIs)	122	67673
1-2. Total RCCIs (Do not include schools counted in 1-1)	0	0
1-2a. RCCIs with day students (Report ONLY day students in 1-2a)	0	0
1-2b. RCCIs with NO day students	0	0

SFA VCR Section 2

Section 2: SFAs with schools operating Community Eligibility Option
 ONLY SFAs with Community Eligibility Option must report Section 2

	A. Number of Schools or Institutions	B. Number of Students
2-1. Operating the Community Eligibility Option	122	67673

SFA-VCR Section 3

Section 3: Students approved as FREE eligible NOT subject to verification
 All SFA's must report Section 3 or check box 3, if applicable

	A. CEPI Direct Certification	B. Number of FREE Students
3-1: Check the box only if all schools and/or RCCs in the SFA were not required to perform direct certification with SNAP		
3-2: Students directly certified through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	44420	0
3-3: Students directly certified through other programs: include those already certified through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), those documented as homeless, migrant, seasonal, header, Head Start, Pre-K, Even Start, or non-applicant but approved by local officials. DO NOT include SNAP students already reported in 3-2.	299	0

SFA VCR section 4

Section 4: Students approved as FREE or REDUCED PRICE eligible through a household application
 All SFAs collecting applications must report Section 4

	A. Number of Applications	B. Number of Students
K-1: Approved as categorically FREE Eligible: Based on those providing documentation (e.g. a case number for SNAP, TANF, EDCR) on an application	0	0
K-2: Approved as FREE eligible: Based on household size and income information	0	0
K-3: Approved as REDUCED PRICE eligible: Based on household size and income information	0	0
F-1: Total FREE Eligible Students Reported: 0		
T-2: Total REDUCED PRICE Eligible Students Reported: 0		

T-1 and T-2

- Sections T-1 and T-2 are automatically tallied
- T-1 is the total of all Free Eligible Students reported.
- T-2 is the total of all Reduced Price Eligible Students reported.

T-1: Total FREE Eligible Students Reported: 361 T-2: Total REDUCED PRICE Eligible Students Reported: 58

SFA VCR email and certify



Don't make me call you

If you need help completing Verification...
 please call as soon as possible:
 Lisa Brown Taylor 517.241.3885 or
browntaylorl@michigan.gov



Questions?

School Nutrition Programs
 > (517) 373-3347
 > MDE-schoolnutrition@michigan.gov