

**LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY REVIEW SYSTEM (LEARS)  
VERIFICATION SUMMARY REPORT  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**1. What is verification and who is required to file a LEARS-Verification Summary Report?**

Verification is confirmation of eligibility for free and reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Each year, all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) participating in the NSLP must submit a LEARS-Verification Summary Report, which is located at:

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/5\\_Verification\\_of\\_Eligibility\\_for\\_Sch\\_Meals\\_399229\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/5_Verification_of_Eligibility_for_Sch_Meals_399229_7.pdf)

Additionally, Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs) participating in the NSLP or SBP *with day programs*, must collect Free and Reduced Price School Meal Family Applications for the students that attend their facility for the day. These RCCIs must also conduct verification on these applications *and* submit a LEARS-Verification Summary Report.

**2. When is verification done?**

The verification process must begin on October 1 each year and be completed by November 15 each year. The results of this process must be reported to MDE via the LEARS-Verification Summary Report no later than February 15.

**3. Where do I find LEARS?**

The LEARS-Verification Summary Report is located at: [www.michigan.gov/meis](http://www.michigan.gov/meis). Scroll down to Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) and click on LEARS-Verification Summary Report.

**4. I just tried to log in to the LEARS-Verification Summary Report, but could not get in. Why?**

In order to login to the Lears-Verification Summary Report, a Security Authorization Form must have been submitted. If a Security Authorization Form has not been submitted, return to the LEARS login page and click on the link Security Access Form. This form must be completed, signed by the school administrator, and faxed to MDE before you will be able to access the report. If you have already submitted this form and still cannot log in, please remember MEIS User IDs and Passwords are case-sensitive. Always check to be sure that the "Caps Lock" button on your keyboard is not turned on when entering the password. Questions regarding security access to LEARS should be directed to Ruby Zavala at 517-373-0420.

**5. Why don't I see a "certify" button at the bottom right of the report as indicated in the instructions? I entered my information and hit the save button. Is my report still submitted?**

Only the authorized person with Level 3 security rights in your agency is allowed to certify the report. Lower access levels can read and/or enter information into the report. If you hit the Save button, the information you entered is saved and ready to submit. Your report will not be submitted to MDE until it has been certified by someone from your agency with Level 3 security access rights. A confirmation that the report has been certified will appear at the top of the screen.

**6. How does someone get level 3 access rights?**

School districts are permitted to have no more than two (2) CNAP Level 3 users. Please refer to Food Service Administrative Policy #7 School Year (SY) 2005-2006 MEIS Security Agreement or call Ruby Zavala at 517-373-0420 for questions regarding your access level.

**7. Error messages appear when I attempt to certify my report, but I don't understand exactly what the message means or what I did wrong. What do I do, and whom can I contact?**

Click on the link at the bottom of the error message and view the Block Identification Grid. The grid assigns an identification marker for each block in the report for which data is submitted. This same number-letter combination indicating the location of the error is referred to in the message and in the Instructions for Completing the Local Educational Agency Verification Summary Report form. The form may be viewed and printed by clicking on the "HELP" link on the login page or the "HELP" link located in the upper right corner of the report. You may also find it helpful to view some of the "common errors" listed at the end of this document (#17).

**8. Why can't I change any of the numbers in Part I, Column A?**

The numbers appearing in Part I, Column A have been populated from the information certified in the School Meals Program Claims Form (SM-4012-SL) for the month of October. December 30 is the deadline for filing amendments to October claims (regulatory 60-day deadline; see Food Service Administrative Policy #2 SY 2012-2013 60-day Deadline for Claim Submission and Late Claim Submissions at: [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530\\_6569-19613--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_6569-19613--,00.html)) The numbers in Part I, Column A are blocked and cannot be changed. If you believe your district/school has a justified claim amendment which was or was not submitted prior to the regulatory deadline and the amended numbers are not reflected in the Verification Summary Report, please confirm this with school staff responsible for filing the SM-4012-SL before contacting our office.

**9. Should my numbers in part I, Column B, match those in Column A?**

No, Part I, Column A represents only enrolled, eligible **students** as of the last day of October and certified in the SM-4012-SL. Column B represents the number of household **applications** approved as of the first day of October.

This area is probably the most error-prone without actually producing an error message. The more recent regulatory requirement to use *only* "household" applications has necessitated a change to the way that some districts will need to keep track of their application vs. student numbers, particularly if they are using a purchased software program to assist in this effort. Since a household could contain only one student, there is no built-in edit for this reporting error. It is the responsibility of the LEA to assure that this process meets all regulatory requirements and policies and that the software used is performing correctly to meet these requirements.

**10. What is the difference between a "household" application and a "family" application?**

As of July 1, 2005, all LEAs are required to use only household applications. A "household" is defined as a group of related or unrelated individuals who are not residents of an institution or boarding house, but who are living as one economic unit. A household may consist of one or more families. A household cannot be required to file more than one household application, regardless of the number of families in the economic unit. The application is treated and counted as a single household application.

11. **Do I have to verify income for students in a household that already has a student that is eligible for benefits through direct certification?**

No, if a student in a household is eligible through direct certification then all other students in the household are also qualified for benefits through extending categorical eligibility. For more information refer to Food Service Administrative Policy #3 SY 2009-2010 Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household at:  
[http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530\\_6569-19613--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_6569-19613--,00.html).

Students eligible for free meals via direct certification as of October 31, will be accounted for in Section I, Question 4-0, Column A. This section is prepopulated.

12. **Why can't I change the number in part I, question 4-0, column A?**

Part I, Question 4-0, Column A is automatically filled with information about all students eligible for free meals via direct certification as of October 31, 2012. The direct certification data is from the Centers for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI). This number cannot be changed.

13. **Does the number in question 4-1, Column A have to be equal to the number in question 4-0, Column A?**

No, not necessarily. Question 4-0, Column A is prepopulated with information about students that are eligible for free meals from the direct certification list and cannot be changed. The number in Question 4-1, Column A can either be the same or greater than the number in Question 4-0, Column A.

Question 4-1, Column A can be used to add more students that are directly certified that may not have shown up on the direct certification report. Examples of students that may not have shown up on the list are:

- children that are directly certified and not on the list
- foster children
- runaway and homeless children

14. **Our LEA participates in Community Eligibility Option. Question 4-1, Column A has a section that was not there last year. How do we complete this section?**

Question 4-1, Column A has a *new* section for LEAs participating in the *Community Eligibility Option*:

LEAs that are participating in Community Eligibility Option (CEO) will have additional sections in Question 4-1, Column A. These sections will only appear for districts with at least one CEO building.

- LEAs with some buildings participating in CEO record the numbers in both sections; the *Students in Non-CEO Sites* and the *Students in CEO Sites*.
- If all schools in the LEA participate in CEO the number is recorded in the *Students in CEO Sites* section.
- If the LEA **does not** participate in the Community Eligibility Option, Question 4, Column A will be the same as in previous years.

15. **I received an error message telling me that my number of verified applications does not equal the required 3% of the approved applications. Our district uses a software program to select the applications to be verified and we used the number it selected. Why am I getting this error message?**

Some software programs have not been set to “round-up” decimals, as required in the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) *Eligibility Guidance for School Meals Manual* when selecting the mandatory 3% of approved applications. As a result, this caused your verified application numbers to fall short by a single application. It is your agency’s responsibility to assure that your software vendor is aware of the regulatory requirements and to check the accuracy of your verification process. Please refer to [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/5\\_Verification\\_of\\_Eligibility\\_for\\_Sch\\_Meals\\_399229\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/5_Verification_of_Eligibility_for_Sch_Meals_399229_7.pdf), which includes an overview of the regulatory requirements and explains the sampling methods. It also includes a check list, worksheet, and a sample Verification Summary Report.

16. **I’ve entered numbers in LEARS based on my written Verification Summary Report completed during the verification process. However, I did have some households selected for verification reapply and submit new applications which were approved. Do I report these in both places or deduct them from the number of changed categories?**

The original numbers you entered remain correct per the initial results of verification. Those who reapply are approved based on the new information on that application with verification documentation requested at the time of reapplication.

17. **After certifying my report and receiving no error messages, I received an e-mail indicating there are possible errors in my report. What does that mean?**

The LEARS-Verification Summary Report program contains a minimal number of edits based on software provided by USDA. However, there are some areas of the report for which “red-flagging” point out the errors that cannot be written due to variables which exist in the verification process. Just a few of the frequent mistakes made which would not be flagged as errors include:

- *Identical numbers are reported for Part I, Column A, and for Part I, Column B.*  
Column A is for reporting the number of eligible students as of the last operating day in October. Column B is for reporting the number of household applications approved as of October 1. While it is, of course, possible for any household to have only one eligible student, it is highly unlikely that all household applications received would fall into this category. Do not try to make these two columns match. Remember also that you are only reporting those applications which were approved as of October 1 in Column B, and this is the number of applications upon which your verification sampling size should have been selected October 1.
- *An incorrect radial button is selected for the type of sampling used.*  
A number of districts were required to use Basic Sampling to perform their verification in SY 2012-2013 due to a non-response rate which exceeded 20% in their reporting for the SY 2011-2012 verification activities. As a result of having selected the radial button which indicated Focused Sampling was used, they continued to be required to use Basic Sampling for SY 2011-2012 for failure to do so in the prior school year. In a high number of cases, the district/school had actually used the correct sampling method. Both sampling methods use error-prone income applications as the priority for selection, but a review of Food Service Administrative Policy #5 SY 2012-2013 Verification Eligibility for School Meals, will explain the distinct difference in these two types of sampling.

- *Reporting of verification results does not reflect the type of sampling indicated.*  
Please review Food Service Administrative Policy #5 SY 2012-2013 Verification Eligibility for School Meals, as well as the USDA *Eligibility Guidance for School Meals Manual*, prior to performing your verification activities. If the individual entering the information in the LEARS-Verification Summary Report is unfamiliar with the sampling used, it is important to check that the appropriate sampling method was used and the correct radial button selected to indicate such.
- *Too many applications were selected for verification.*  
Please refer to Food Service Administrative Policy #5 SY 2012-2013 Verification Eligibility for School Meals. To assist LEAs with the verification process, the document *12 Steps to Conducting Verification* has been developed. The Website has links to all required documents needed to complete the verification process.
- LEAs must verify **only** the number of applications as calculated by the sample formula. Verification of **ALL** approved applications is not allowed. While the verification sample cannot exceed the exact sample size, LEAs still have an obligation to verify questionable applications (for cause). For cause may include, but is not limited to, situations where school officials have knowledge of household circumstances that would cause them to verify the information on the application. These applications, however, are not counted in satisfying the required standard sample size.

These questions and noted mistakes are not all-inclusive of reporting discrepancies. Please double-check all information entered in the LEARS-Verification Summary Report, make sure to receive a confirmation that the report has been certified, and print a copy for your records.

Should you still require assistance, please send questions specific to this report to the following e-mail address: [MDE-Schoolnutrition@michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-Schoolnutrition@michigan.gov). It is important to identify your name, district/school, and a phone number in your message.

If you wish to speak with someone, call 517-373-3347 and your call will be directed to the appropriate person. If you are instructed to leave a voice message, please indicate that your concerns are about the Verification Summary Report.