

CERTIFICATION AND BENEFIT ISSUANCE: APPLICATION FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS

Office of School Support Services
School Nutrition Programs

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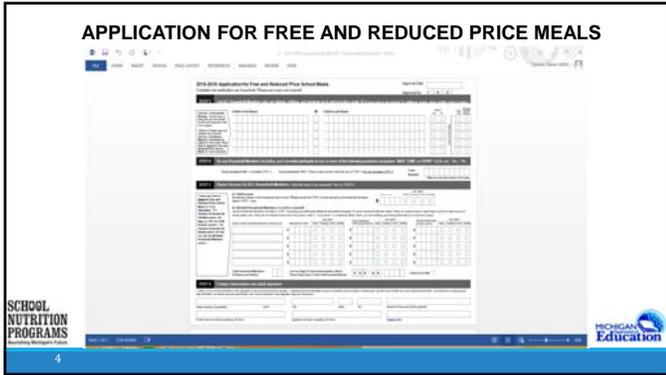
Objectives Family Meals Apps: Processing, Eligibility and Certification

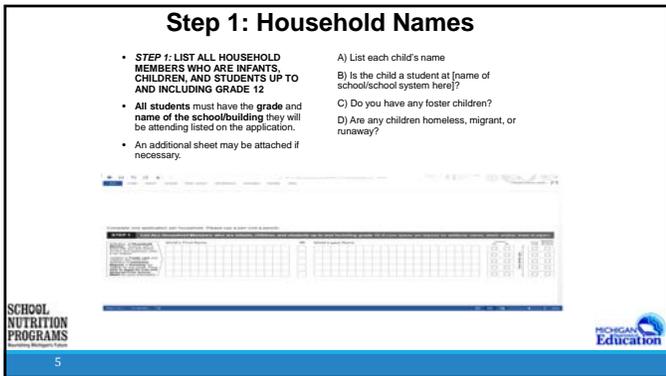
Participants will understand:

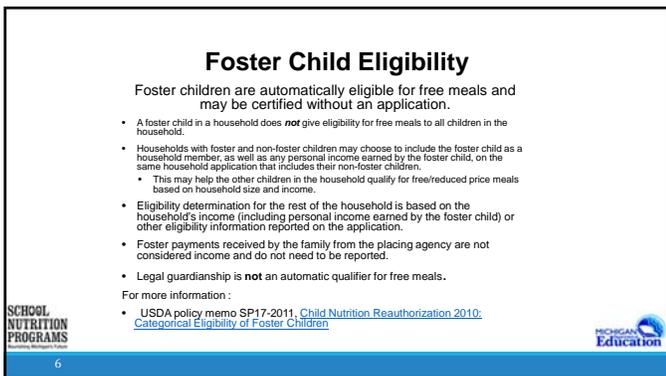
- New Meal Application and how to properly process the application
- Changes due to the new meal application
- Where to find other support information

APPLICATION FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS









HOMELESS MIGRANT AND RUNAWAY YOUTH

- Homeless, migrant, and runaway youth are categorically eligible (automatically qualify) for free meals.

Step 2: Assistance Programs

- DO ANY HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS (INCLUDING YOU) CURRENTLY PARTICIPATE IN ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: SNAP, TANF, OR FDIPIR?

Categorical Eligibility for free meals is extended to all children in the household if any member of the household gets benefits from one of these assistance programs.

Circle Yes or No and fill in number using 3 boxes

Assistance Program Households – Entire Household is Free:

- **Food Assistance Program (SNAP)**
 - Direct Certification
 - Application
- **Family Independence Program (TANF)**
 - Direct Certification
 - Application
- **Food Dist. Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)**
 - Application

Other Source Categorical Eligibility

Eligibility for free meals is NOT extended to all children in the household.

Only the Child is Free:

- **Foster Children**
 - Direct Certification
 - Application
- **Homeless, Runaway and Migrant**
 - Signed list from coordinator/liaison
 - Application
- **Head Start/Even Start**
 - Enrollment list from program coordinator

2nd PAGE RACIAL/ETHNIC DATA COLLECTION

- This section is **optional**. The data may be used for completing the post award civil rights data collection that is required annually.
- Two categories, each is stand-alone (fill out both for every child):
 - Racial
 - Ethnic

2nd page Continued

- Make sure the privacy and nondiscrimination statements are up to date.
 - Check www.michigan.gov/schoolnutrition for current version.
- Verification of applications:
 - Must be completed by Nov. 15th each year.
 - Note any reasons for change in eligibility based on verification results.

Page 2, cont'd: Updated Nondiscrimination Statement

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Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Determination Official Signature on Back Page/Determination On Front Page

- The federally defined School Year is July 1 through June 30.
 - Applications cannot be accepted or processed prior to July 1.
- All applications must be processed within 10 days of receipt (def'n up to SFA).
- All households can reapply at any time during the school year if they believe their benefits may increase.
- Households that have had their benefits terminated can reapply in the same school year but will need to submit proof of income or categorical eligibility.
- Benefits should not be in effect if the application is not completed, dated, and signed by the determining official.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL

- If a household fails to apply and the child is known to be eligible, local officials may complete an application on behalf of the child. The completed application should be:
 - Based on the best household size and income information available.
 - **Limited use** in individual situations and must not be used to make eligibility determinations for categories or groups of children.
 - Excluded from verification.
- The household must be notified that the child has been certified to receive free or reduced price benefits.

Changes to the new Application

- Adult and non-adult (children/students) household members are cleanly divided into separate reporting sections to prevent household members from being listed twice, as well as to encourage full reporting of all household members.
- Any income fields left empty or blank will be counted as zeroes. If you write '0' or leave any fields blank, you are certifying (promising) that there is no income to report.
- As an added accountability measure, a field has been added for reporting the total number of members in the household.
- Information about the Social Security Number is now requested in the same section as the income reporting field (rather than in the signature block), as applicants indicating categorical eligibility through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are not required to provide this information.

Recent Updates
Earlier Effective Dates

- **OPTIONAL:** Districts may choose the date submitted instead of date approved as the “effective date” of free/reduced price determination (memo SP 11-2014)
 - Need a way to document date submitted (e.g., date stamp)
 - Applies to eligibility determinations via applications only
 - May be used when waiting for documentation of homeless, migrant or foster children based on an application
 - Must use the same date decision across all schools and programs

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Recent Updates, cont'd
Earlier Effective Dates

- **OPTIONAL:** For children on the direct certification list, districts may choose the automated matching date or effective date of a letter of benefit, instead of the date the district processes the data match as the “effective date” (memo 51-2014)
 - Must have been received in the current school year
 - Need a way to document date submitted (e.g., date stamp)
 - If this is chosen, must be applied consistently
 - Memo attachment gives more scenarios and guidance

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Recent Updates, cont'd
Optional Drop of “Reduced” Charges

- **OPTIONAL:** Districts allowed to partially say “Goodbye” to the “Reduced” category (memo 17-2014)
 - Districts are allowed to offer meals at no cost or lower cost to students who qualify for reduced price meals
 - Applies to both breakfast (SBP) and lunch (NSLP)
 - Schools can exercise this option selectively
 - These students must still be claimed and reimbursed as reduced price students
 - Reduced charge can be covered by funds from the nonprofit school food service account or other sources
 - Universal Breakfast can use nonprofit food service account money to cover reduced kids, but not paid

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ONLINE OR SCANNABLE APPLICATIONS

- Free and reduced price family applications and supporting materials may be made available online.
 - ✓ Electronic signatures permitted
 - ✓ Paper applications may be scanned
- USDA/FNS does not evaluate, approve or endorse any software for application processing.
- The LEA must make sure requirements are met for certification and verification.

REGULAR YEAR AND SUMMER MIGRANT PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Migrant Education Directors

- Go to: www.michigan.gov/efo
1. Scroll to Programs
 2. Click Title I, Part C - Migrant

Programs

- Title Program Overview
- Section 31a At-Risk
- Title I, Part A
- Title I, Part C - Migrant
- Title I, Part D - Neglected & Delinquent
- Title II, Part A - Teacher & Principal Training & Recruiting
- Title III - English Learner & Immigrant Education Programs
- Title X - McKinney-Vento Homeless

Contact:

Special Populations Unit, Office of Field Services
P: 517-373-6066

HOMELESS LIAISONS

Homeless Liaisons

- Go to: www.michigan.gov/efo
1. Scroll to Programs
 2. Click Title X - McKinney Vento Homeless

Programs

- Title Program Overview
- Section 31a At-Risk
- Title I, Part A
- Title I, Part C - Migrant
- Title I, Part D - Neglected & Delinquent
- Title II, Part A - Teacher & Principal Training & Recruiting
- Title III - English Learner & Immigrant Education Programs
- Title X - McKinney Vento Homeless

State of Michigan - Homeless Education Programs Contacts

Pam Kies-Lowe
P: 517-373-8691
E: kies-lowep@michigan.gov

Linda A. Forward
P: 517-373-8480
E: forwardl@michigan.gov

CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY

- Only one case number is required to make all students in the household categorically eligible (automatically free) for free meals.
 - Case numbers need to have **nine digits and start with the number 1** (e.g., #123456789) Thus the 9 boxes on the application
- List the name of the person receiving FAP or FIP benefits and the case number.
- If a case number is provided in step 2, then step 1, 2, and 4 need to be completed

CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY

- **Qualify as categorically eligible (automatically free):**
 - Directly certified
 - Foster children
 - Homeless
 - Migrant
 - Head Start
 - SNAP (formerly Food Stamps)
 - FDPIR
 - FAP
 - FIP (TANF)
- **Eligibility is extended to rest of household:** Most cases on this slide
 - *Exceptions: Families hosting foster and homeless children, Families with child in Head Start. These families must submit applications for other household members.*

Direct Certification

Students on the Direct Certification Report = **Automatically eligible for free school meals, as are other members of their household.**

- Direct certification takes precedence over an application.
- If a paper application is submitted for directly certified children, the LEA must disregard the paper application.
- Access to the direct certification report is through the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS).
- Must be checked 3 times during school year, though recommend checking monthly.

BENEFIT ISSUANCE LIST

Every school district needs to compile a list with the names of students who are eligible for free and reduced price meals. This list should be:

- Updated/revised monthly.
- Used as documentation to support the monthly claim for reimbursement.
- Available at the point of service for a back-up system in case of a power outage or technical difficulty.
- Based on a system that hides free/reduced/paid status of students.

SHARING INFORMATION, RECORDS AND DOCUMENTATIONS

- Keep records for 3 years plus the current year.
 - Keep an "inactive" file for those students no longer attending school.
- Eligibility information **must never** be shown in a way that students' eligibility categories may be recognized by other students.
- The numbers of eligible students, **not names**, can be shared with all programs (parental consent is needed for all other purposes).
 - For specific questions and answers regarding disclosure of eligibility, refer to section 7 of the *Eligibility Manual*.

Recipient of Information	What May Be Disclosed	Requirements
Programs under the National School Lunch Act or Child Nutrition Act	All eligibility determinations	Prior notice and consent not required
Federal, State or local means tested nutrition programs with eligibility standards	Eligibility status only	Prior notice and consent not required

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

- Households with limited English proficiency (LEP) need to have access to information in other languages.
- LEAs must make a reasonable effort to the maximum extent practicable. This includes:
 - Application materials
 - Communications with households concerning eligibility determinations
- Volunteers may be used, but make sure they understand interpreter ethics – particularly confidentiality.
- Children should not be used as interpreters.

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE IN OTHER LANGUAGES

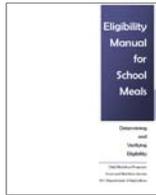
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/translated-applications>

Eligibility Manual

For more information, please refer to the *Eligibility Manual for School Meals Manual* at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/default.htm>

The MDE website link: www.Michigan.gov/SchoolNutrition

- Scroll to "Guidance"
- Click on [Eligibility Certification and Verification](#)



Questions?

- School Nutrition Programs
 - 517-373-3347
 - MDE-schoolnutrition@michigan.gov
- Website: www.Michigan.gov/SchoolNutrition
