



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

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**FOOD SERVICE**

**ADMINISTRATIVE MEMO No. 2  
SCHOOL YEAR 2018-2019**

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

**DATE: August 24, 2018**

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 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) upload to the MSDS with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid participant data, as well as Foster Child data from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

With School Year 2017-2018, Direct Certification via Medicaid data started. Students directly certified via Medicaid will either be eligible for Medicaid Free (M) or Medicaid Reduced-Price (R) school meals.

The Direct Certification Report lists students who are automatically certified as eligible for free school meals or reduced-price meals. Each LEA must notify households with matched students that they are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals and no further application is necessary. If the household wants to decline the free or reduced-price school meals benefit, they must notify the school in writing.

A separate notification letter for Medicaid Reduced-Price eligibility must be sent to households along with a Free and Reduced-Price Meals Application and the Income Eligibility Guidelines. The link to the Medicaid Reduced-Price Eligibility Notification Letter is [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/9\\_-\\_Medicaid\\_DC\\_Reduced-Price\\_Eligibility\\_Approval\\_578249\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/9_-_Medicaid_DC_Reduced-Price_Eligibility_Approval_578249_7.pdf). The household can complete an application to determine if they qualify for free meals based on household size and income. There is a section on the letter for the household to decline the reduced-price benefit by notifying the school. Use the eligibility that will be of the greatest benefit to the student.

When a student is Directly Certified by SNAP (S), TANF (T), or Foster Child (F), that eligibility category will supersede the Medicaid eligibility categories. Applications with Medicaid case numbers are not acceptable to determine eligibility for Medicaid Free or Medicaid Reduced-Price meals. Medicaid matching for free or reduced-price eligibility is only by direct certification.

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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.
- **Medicaid Free and Medicaid Reduced:** Benefits can be extended to other children in the same household.

### **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. The CEPI Calendar is within the menu on the left-hand side of the CEPI website homepage.

The Frequency of Direct Certification Matching Activities is specified in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service Memorandum SP31-2011. 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 Direct Certification Report is refreshed bi-weekly during August, September, and October and then monthly thereafter. 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 2018 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 2018; 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 are uploaded to the MSDS.

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

**To obtain a MI Login User access to 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**
    - MI Login 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 CEPI Applications menu on the left side of the screen on the [CEPI website](#). This page contains a link to the CEPI Calendar Page where the Direct Certification Report Timeline is listed. Information and directions are in the three drop down menus.
  - ✓ Manuals
  - ✓ Help and Training
  - ✓ Technical Material

**For more information specific to Nonpublic Schools:**

- *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** found under the Manuals drop down menu.

The [MDE School Nutrition Programs website](#)<sup>i</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>iii</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 517-241-5374.

Questions regarding this policy memo may be directed to Pamela Baker, School District Consultant, at [bakerp8@michigan.gov](mailto:bakerp8@michigan.gov).

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

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

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/2017-edition-eligibility-manual-school-meals>