

## Determining Student Free and Reduced-Price Meal Eligibility for School Year 2021-2022 Frequently Asked Questions

For School Year 2021-2022 (SY 21-22) schools will be able to participate in the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option (NSLP-SSO). NSLP-SSO allows all students in the school to eat at no cost. However, schools are still required to report the Supplemental Nutrition Eligibility (SNE) in the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). SNE is a report of family income characteristics which may indicate a student's eligibility for benefits at school such as free or reduced-price meals, Advance Placement (AP) exam fee waivers, Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), etc.

### **1. What is the SNE data used for?**

The SNE characteristic is used in determining the economically disadvantaged subgroup. This subgroup is used by multiple State of Michigan offices for categorical funding allocations and in a multitude of state and federal reports. It must be submitted for each student who is determined to meet eligibility requirements for free or reduced-price meals. Following are some of these uses:

- Section 31a at all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)
- Federal Title I Part A funding for public school academies only
- E-Rate
- Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B funding for all LEAs
- Perkins Core Performance Indicators
- School Index and Parent Transparency Dashboard
- Graduation and Dropout Rates
- Great Start Readiness Program
- Child Nutrition Programs
- Pandemic-EBT

### **2. What MSDS collections require SNE to be reported for free and reduced-price eligible students?**

The following collections require SNE to be reported:

- Fall & Spring General Collection
- Student Record Maintenance (SRM) Collection
- Early Childhood Collections

### **3. What are the ways that free and reduced-price eligible students are identified at the local level?**

Free and reduced-price eligible students are identified via the following ways:

- Direct Certification with extension of eligibility to other students in the household

- Income Based Form
  - Free and Reduced-Price Meals Family Application for Traditional Claim Schools
  - Household Information Report (HIR) for Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Schools
- Categorical Eligibility
  - Students experiencing homelessness
  - Migratory students
  - Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
  - Students experiencing Foster Care
  - Students in Head Start

#### **4. What is required of Traditional Claim Schools in SY 21-22?**

According to [USDA Memo SP 15-2021, Questions and Answers for Child Nutrition Program Operations in School Year 2021-2022](#),<sup>i</sup> question 29, districts that elect to participate in the SSO must use a Free and Reduced-Price Meal Family Application to determine student eligibility for SY 21-22 but cannot require families to complete the forms to participate in the meal program. However, it is critical to collect those Income Based Forms in order to determine the SNE characteristic for the programs identified above. Therefore, it is important that districts have a plan to collect student eligibility data even in a school year where eligibility is not attached to a meal benefit. Districts that collect Free and Reduced-Price Meal Family Applications will be required to conduct Verification.

#### **5. What is required of Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Schools in SY 21-22?**

Schools participating in the CEP (regardless of SSO status) are not allowed to collect Free and Reduced-Price Meal Family Applications, they must use the HIR to collect eligibility data. Families are not required to complete the HIR to receive meals but do need to complete the HIR for the additional educational programs noted above.

- If a district is participating in CEP, 100% of students should NOT be reported as SNE.
- Only report to the SNE component for CEP students that have been determined as eligible based on meeting the criteria on the HIR.
- There is no need to report the SNE component for CEP students who are directly certified.

#### **6. Can school food service staff process Household Information Reports?**

School food service staff may process the forms, but the cost of processing the household information reports may not be paid from the Non-profit Food Service Account (NSFSA) and the forms may not be associated with school meals. School food service staff have expertise collecting household income reports. If food service staff process the forms, the district must pay for (or reimburse the NSFSA) for the cost of processing forms.

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