

Frequently Asked Questions for Direct Certification Requirements for Public and Non-public Schools Participating in the School Nutrition Programs in School Year (SY) 2024-2025

Direct Certification Basics

Where do I find the Direct Certification Report?

The Direct Certification Report is available for all school districts, including non-public schools, through the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). **Authorized users** can access MSDS through the State of Michigan's [MILogin system](#).

What is the Direct Certification Report?

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), Medicaid participant data, as well as Foster Child data from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

If a student is on the Direct Certification Report, what does that mean?

The Direct Certification Report includes students who are automatically certified as eligible for free school meals or reduced-price meals because of participation in assistance programs.

How will households know if their students are on the Direct Certification Report?

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.

What if a household does not want the meal benefit?

If the household wants to decline the free or reduced-price school meals benefit, they must notify the school in writing.

What happens if a student is directly certified as eligible for reduced-price meals but the parent states the student qualifies for free meals?

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 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.

What is the hierarchy for programs that qualify students for free meals via Direct Certification?

When a student is Directly Certified by SNAP (S), TANF (T), or Foster Child (F), that eligibility category will supersede the Medicaid eligibility categories. So, on the direct certification report you will always see an S, T, or F before Medicaid (M) or Medicaid Reduced (R).

Is a Free and Reduced-Price Meal application with a Medicaid case number the same as Medicaid Direct Certification?

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.

Where do I find example letters to send to households if a student appears on the Direct Certification Report?

Direct Certification template letters are posted on the Michigan Department of Education's School Nutrition Program [Direct Certification](#) webpage.

What is Extended Eligibility?

Extended Eligibility applies to other students living in the same household as the student on the Direct Certification Report. Here is a breakdown of how it works:

- 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 Price: Benefits can be extended to other children in the same household.

Fall General, Student Record Maintenance (SRM) and Fall Early Childhood

What is Supplemental Nutrition Eligibility (SNE) and how does it play into Direct Certification?

The Supplemental Nutrition Eligibility (SNE) Component is used to report the student's eligibility for free or reduced-price milk or meals through the National School Lunch Program in the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). Data reported in this component are used to identify economically disadvantaged students. These data are used for categorical funding allocations, such as E-rate and Section 31a At-risk, as well as 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.

Why was a new code added to identify students who are free eligible via Direct Certification extended eligibility?

Supplemental Nutrition Eligibility (Supplemental Nutrition Component) added a code to identify students who are free eligible via Direct Certification extended eligibility. This component will allow LEAs to identify students that had a free direct certification benefit extended at the local level. This new process of free direct certification extended will help support the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Identified Student Percentage (ISP).

For additional details, please refer to the schema summaries and the [collection component matrix](#). The collection details manuals have been updated to include the new code.

Direct Certification for Nonpublic School Students

What is the Nonpublic School Student Roster?

The MSDS Nonpublic School Student Roster Collection was created during the 2022-23 school year, and replaced use of the [Early Roster](#) Collection by nonpublic schools.

What do I need to know about the Nonpublic School Student Roster?

Nonpublic schools participating in the National School Lunch Program are required to submit their entire student enrollment, including new enrollees and existing students, in this collection. These data are used to update the direct certification report of children who are automatically certified for free school meals. The report will be refreshed throughout the school year. For more information, please visit CEPI's [Direct Certification Report](#) page.

The schema and sample files can be found under Technical Material on the [CEPI Nonpublic Schools web page](#). The [MSDS Nonpublic School User Guide](#) has been updated for the new collection.

What if a public school uploads enrollment for a nonpublic school?

The Direct Certification Report is populated based on the school the student attends. Therefore, the user that is accessing the report must have an MSDS profile that is attached to the school. A [CEPI Nonpublic User Application Security Form](#) must be completed and signed by the nonpublic school lead administrator. This access can be granted to either a nonpublic school user, or to a user from the public school that is uploading the students.

Direct Certification Timelines and Schedules

What are the annual requirements for directly certifying students?

It is best practice to pull the Direct Certification Report as it is available to ensure all students eligible are receiving proper meal benefits. Districts and nonpublic schools are required to run the Direct Certification report 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

Exceptions: Special Milk Program and Residential Child Care Institutions

What are the direct certification requirements for CEP schools?

CEP schools are required to run direct certification at least once a school year. However, it is best practice to run it more frequently to support efforts to identify students for Supplemental Nutrition Eligibility in MSDS collections, to support students experiencing foster care, and calculating ISP for future CEP applications.

Where can I find out when the latest versions of the Direct Certification Reports will be available?

The table below includes all the direct certification refresh dates for SY 2024-2025. In addition to the direct certification refresh dates, all of the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) report collection windows and deadlines are posted to the [CEPI calendar](#).

Refresh Date	MSDS Direct Certification Refresh Description
8/15/2024	Includes Nonpublic School Student Roster and Early Roster records submitted by 8/12/2024
8/29/2024	Includes Nonpublic School Student Roster and Early Roster records submitted by 8/26/2024
9/12/2024	Includes Nonpublic School Student Roster and Early Roster records submitted by 9/9/2024
10/3/2024	Includes SRM, Nonpublic School Student Roster and Early Roster records submitted by 9/30/2024
10/17/2024	Includes SRM, Nonpublic School Student Roster and Early Roster records submitted by 10/14/2024
11/12/2024	Includes SRM, Nonpublic School Student Roster and Early Roster records submitted by 11/6/2024
12/4/2024	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 11/26/2024
12/19/2024	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 12/16/2024
1/16/2025	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 1/13/2025
1/30/2025	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 1/27/2025
2/13/2025	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by

Refresh Date	MSDS Direct Certification Refresh Description
	2/10/2025
2/27/2025	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 2/24/2025
3/24/2025	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 3/19/2025
4/15/2025	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 4/9/2025
4/24/2025	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 4/21/2025
5/15/2025	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 5/12/2025
5/29/2025	Includes SRM and Nonpublic School Student Roster records submitted by 5/23/2025

Can you tell me what the deadlines are for the different MSDS Collections?

The table below shows the opening and closing dates for SY 2024-2025 collections where student enrollment and eligibility is reported. For more information on these collections, visit the MSDS [Data Collections website](#).

DATE	DESCRIPTION
6/10/2024	Nonpublic School Student Roster Collection Opens
6/10/2024	Early Roster Collection Opens
9/23/2024	Early Childhood Fall Collection Opens
9/23/2024	Fall General Collection Opens
9/25/2024	SRM Collection Opens
10/2/2024	Fall Count Day
11/6/2024	Fall General Submission Certification Deadline
11/13/2024	Fall General Collection Recertification Deadline
11/13/2024	Early Childhood Fall Collection Certification Deadline
11/13/2024	Early Roster Collection Closes
12/11/2024	Early Childhood Spring Collection Opens
2/5/2025	Spring General Collection Opens
2/12/2025	Spring Count Day
2/26/2025	Early Childhood Spring Certification Deadline
3/19/2025	Spring General Collection Certification Deadline
3/26/2025	Spring General Collection Recertification Deadline
4/16/2025	Early Childhood End of Program Collection Opens
5/1/2025	EOY General Collection Opens
6/4/2025	Nonpublic School Student Roster Collection Closes

DATE	DESCRIPTION
6/30/2025	EOY General Submission Certification Deadline
8/27/2025	Early Childhood End of Program Collection Certification Deadline

Who can I contact with additional questions?

For further assistance, please send an email to MDE-SchoolNutrition@michigan.gov.