



## WISCONSIN SCHOOL NUTRITION

# IN A NUTSHELL

## Determining Free and Reduced Price Eligibility and Verification Processes - Overview

### Getting Started

#### Important Weblinks

- [Free and Reduced Price Webpage](#)
- [Verification Webpage](#)
- [Direct Certification](#)
- [Calendar of Program Requirements](#)
- [Overview of Free/Reduced/Verification Webcasts](#)

#### Resources

##### Online Contract for Program Participation

- [FNS Online Services](#)
- Submit in late spring for upcoming year. User ID is required with password.
- Officials have roles in the free/reduced price and verification process and are listed on the contract: Determining, Confirming, Verifying, and Hearing.
- The [Eligibility Manual](#) provides a comprehensive review of federal requirements, policies, and procedures for establishing eligibility.

### After July 1<sup>st</sup>: Steps to Determine Meal Benefits

#### Public Release:

- Around the start of the school year, the public must be notified that free and reduced price meals and/or free milk are available.
- Use the current school year Public Release from DPI and keep all documentation regarding the submission of the Public Release.
- Submit to local news media. The School Food Authority (SFA) is not required to pay for printing charges.
- Submit or post in the enrollment area to an employment office and local grassroots organizations such as a food pantry, post office, library, etc.

#### Direct Certification (DC)

- User rights must be requested from DPI for Direct Certification Program access.
- Minimum of four DC runs are required each year after July 1<sup>st</sup>.
- DC eligibility codes determine free and reduced price meal benefits. See the [Direct Certification Webpage](#) for the current codes list.
- Determining Official completes this process.

### Processing Applications

#### Paper Applications

- After July 1<sup>st</sup>, send: Parent letter, application, and instructions on how to fill out an application.

- Use the current school year application and materials from DPI to send to families.

### **Electronic Applications**

- If utilizing online applications, software must be approved by DPI before SFAs can accept online applications from families.
- Update software at least annually, as applicable, to include current guidelines.

### **Determining Applications**

- Applications need to be determined within 10 operating days of receipt; the Determining Official completes this task.
- Use the current income eligibility guidelines (IEG) to determine the eligibility status of applications.

### **Household Notifications**

- Notify households of benefit eligibility from direct certification, application, or other source eligibility.
- Compliant template letters are on the DPI website, which include the correct non-discrimination statement.

### **Extension of Benefits/Joint Custody**

- When students match via direct certification or application, benefits can extend to other members in the household.
- Direct certification benefits may extend to students in another household with joint custody. Benefits from a household application do not extend in a joint custody.
- Free meal status from Foster or Other Source Categorical (Homeless, Migrant, Runaway, or Head Start) does not extend to other members of the household.

### **Benefit Issuance (BI) List**

- Update list of students that qualify for free/reduced price meal or milk benefits for the current school year.
- Update as needed due to changes in student eligibility throughout the school year and after carryover period.

### **Carry Over**

- Student's eligibility status from the previous school year is carried over into the current school year for up to 30 operating (school) days or until a new eligibility status is determined, whichever comes first.

### **Disclosure/Sharing of Information**

- Schools must seek written consent from parents/guardians to use information provided on applications for all other non-program. See the Eligibility Manual for further guidance.
- SFA may disclose children's eligibility status only to person(s) determined to be directly connected with the administration or enforcement of a federal education, state education, or state health programs.

### **Appeal**

- Hearing Official oversees the appeal process according to proper procedures.
- Meal/milk benefits remain in effect until the appeal process is completed.

## **Completing the Verification Process**

### **Timeframe**

- Start the verification process around October 1 each school year.
- Use approved applications on file as of October 1 for the verification pool.
- Complete the verification process by November 15 each school year.

### **Sampling Method**

- If the SFA must use the standard sampling method, the SFA will receive a letter from DPI stating the required process.

- Other SFAs may choose one of three sampling methods: standard (error prone), alternate one (random), or alternate two (special calculator).

### **Confirmation Review**

- Confirming Official checks selected application(s) for accuracy before the Verifying Official contacts the household(s).
- Confirming Official signs and dates the application or the tracking tool.

### **Tracking Verification**

- The Verifying Official tracks the verification process using the back of the application or tracking tool provided on the DPI website.
- Send out the verification letter to household(s), which notifies the families that they have been selected for verification.
- Household must provide documentation to support information listed on the submitted application or the meal benefits expire.
- The Verifying Official signs and dates the application or tool when completed.

### **Verification Collection Report (VCR)**

- Complete the Verification Collection Report online and submit after verification is completed.
- Due by February 1 each school year.

### **Record Retention**

- Keep all documents three years plus the current school year.