Nutrition Services

Direct Certification and Direct Verification

Version 3.0.0

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NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Nutrition Services

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Getting Started

Login for the Authorized Representative

If you are a new Authorized Representative for your organization, please fill out the Nutrition Services *Computer Access Application and Agreement* form to get access to the Colyar® Child Nutrition Program (CNP). The form is located at http://www.education.ne.gov/ns/forms/nslpforms/Computer%20Access.pdf

Once the form is filled out, please fax, email, or mail the form to Nutrition Services.

Fax number	(402) 471-4407
Email	Sue.Gilleland@nebraska.gov
Mail	Nutrition Services NE Department of Education 301 Centennial Mall South PO Box 94987 Lincoln, NE 68509-4987

Additional resources for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) are located below:

School Lunch Training, Bookkeeper PowerPoint Videos, Foodservice Training
http://www.education.ne.gov/ns/training/NSLP_Training/SchMealTrain/School%20Meals.html

Application – Income Eligibility Forms and Resource Center
http://www.education.ne.gov/ns/forms/nslpforms/FreeReducedApp.html

Colyar® Child Nutrition Program (CNP)
https://nutrition.education.ne.gov/

If you have other question about the NSLP, please contact (800) 731-2233 (Nebraska Only) or nde.nsweb@nebraska.gov. If you are in Lincoln, please call (402) 471-2488.

If you need access to the e-Scholar® Uniq-ID, please contact the NDE Help Desk at (888) 285-0556 or nde.helpdesk@nebraska.gov. If you are in Lincoln, please call (402) 471-3151.

Direct Certification and Verification Overview

Direct Certification is required for all school districts/systems participating in the NSLP. Direct Certification was designed to improve program access and administrative efficiency. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program (TANF), and Foster Children data from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) are used to determine if a student is directly certified for Free meals in the NSLP and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Participating public and nonpublic schools must submit a current "membership list" including grade levels for PK-12 students a minimum of three times a year (August 31, October 31, and February 28).

Direct Verification is the confirmation of eligibility for free and reduced price meals under the NSLP and (SBP) from a sample without contacting households. A sample size means the number of applications subject to verification; the minimum and maximum sample size is three percent total. The verification process occurs by selecting a sampling (3%) of applications for free/reduced price meals and requesting documentation of all income and family size entered on the application from the family. The family must submit pay stubs, income tax returns, or other documentation to support the application. Historically, the return rate has always been lower than desired and an imposition on the affected families. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has developed a computer matching system to simplify the process and reduce the impact on affected families. Public and nonpublic schools participating in the NSLP can upload or enter student data from an application to CNP. The student data are matched to the -DHHS data on beneficiaries of SNAP, TANF, Foster Child and Medicaid. The public and nonpublic schools can confirm a match based on the results. The Direct Verification process must be completed by November 15.

Direct Certification

Definition of Categorically Eligible Children

Categorically eligible children are automatically eligible for free meal benefits because they, or any household member, receive benefits under Assistance Programs or those children who are designated as members of Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs. An individual child's eligibility under any of the Other Source Categorically Eligible Programs does not convey to other children in the household. There are two ways children may be classified as categorically eligible:

- Through participation in Assistance Programs - SNAP/FDPIR or TANF (a child or any member of the household, receives benefits from SNAP/FDPIR or TANF as determined through direct certification or an application with appropriate case numbers); or

- Through Other Source Categorically Eligible designation - children documented under the applicable definition in this section as:
  - Homeless, runaway, or migrant
  - A foster child,
  - Enrolled in a Federally-funded Head Start Program or a comparable State funded Head Start Program or pre-kindergarten programs; or in an Even Start Program. (Child Nutrition Programs, Food and Nutrition Service U.S.Department of Agriculture, 2012)

Direct Certification of Students in the Same Household

For Direct Certification with SNAP/TANF (and applications with case numbers) all students in the household are categorically eligible for free meals. To the extent possible, the SFA must extend eligibility for free meals to all children in what would be considered a household for the purpose of applying for free or reduced price meals or free milk. If the SFA does not have an application as a reference, it may be able to use school district enrollment records to determine additional children who are part of the household who were not identified through Direct Certification. For households submitting applications with case numbers for some, but not all, of the children in their household, the SFA must certify all children as categorically eligible for free meals or milk. Any income information on the application is disregarded. Further, for purposes of carry-over into the new school year, categorical eligibility must, to the extent feasible, be extended to newly enrolled siblings.

Effects of Direct Certification on Verification

Households whose children are determined eligible through use of the Direct Certification list are exempt from Verification requirements. When the district count of applications on file on October 1 is taken for the purpose of determining the number of applications to be verified, children directly certified should not be included in the count. Also, directly certified children should not be counted as verified. Implementation of Direct Certification will reduce the district's Verification effort by reducing the number of applications on file, thus reducing the minimum required Verification sample

Notification of Predetermined Eligibility

It is required that a written notice be sent to each household certified as eligible for free meal benefits through Direct Certification. The notice must advise them that (1) their children are eligible for free meals; (2) no further application is required; (3) the household should notify the school if they do not want their children to receive free benefits; and (4) that all children in their household qualify for free meals.

Confidentiality of Direct Certification

As with the free and reduced price meal applications, the information provided through Direct Certification is considered confidential. It cannot be used for any purpose other than determining eligibility for free meals unless an Information Release has been signed by the parent or guardian.

Submit the Direct Certification Student List

Each student needs to be assigned an NDE Student ID before the student is matched to the DHHS data set.

The "membership lists" for the current school year can be uploaded to the Colyar® Child Nutrition Program (CNP) system, e-Scholar® Uniq-ID or NDE Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS).

Public and nonpublic schools can enter individual students into the Single Student Interactive Screen or upload a CSV file to the CNP website. More information about direct certification is located at: http://www.education.ne.gov/NS/forms/nslpforms/DirectCert.html

Nonpublic system can upload a CSV file to the e-Scholar® Uniq-ID. Instructions to upload a "membership list" is located at:
http://www.education.ne.gov/nssrs/docs/NSSRS_Steps_Uniqid.pdf

Public District can upload Student and School Enrollment templates to NSSRS. Instructions to upload templates are located at:
http://www.education.ne.gov/nssrs/Resources.html#Instructions

Review the Direct Certification List

District staff can access the "Qualified Student List Directly Certified as Free" report on the Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) website under the 'Certification' Menu button and click on the 'All Dates Combined' in the list date to view all students who qualify. The CNP website is located at https://nutrition.education.ne.gov. If a student is identified in multiple DHHS programs including SNAP, the student is identified a SNAP participant.

"View Additional Possible Matches" report should be reviewed for students that may qualify for Direct Certification. Please review the training video before reviewing the list. The district staff can review the DHHS and Student data to determine if student is a match by choosing 'Yes' or 'No'. A score is assigned to a student to give the probability of the match and the district can

use the information when making a matching decision; the higher the probabilities score the more likely the match.

Direct Verification

Submit the Direct Verification Student List

The selected sample for the current school year can be uploaded to the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) system through the individual student screen or a CSV file. Students who are directly certified should be removed from the list. The CNP website is located at https://nutrition.education.ne.gov.

Review the Direct Verification List

District staff can access the "Direct Verification" report on the Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) website under the 'Verification' Menu button and click on the 'View Process List' and click on the 'All Dates Combined' in the list date to view all students who qualify. The CNP website is located at https://nutrition.education.ne.gov.

More information about direct verification is located at: http://www.education.ne.gov/NS/forms/nslpforms/DirectCert.html

If you have any questions contact: Eva Shepherd at eva.shepherd@nebraska.gov

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. **If a child was directly certified during the prior school year, may her/his benefits be carried forward to the current school year?**
   Prior year Direct Certification benefits may be carried forward only for the first 30 operating days of the current school year. If an application is not received from the household during this period, benefits must be terminated on the 31st operating day.

2. **If a child is listed as directly certified and a sibling living in the same household is not on the list, may the reviewing official certify the sibling as eligible for free meal benefits based on eligibility of the listed child?**
   Yes. Any siblings in the same household who are not on the Direct Certification list for the current school year are categorically eligible for free meals.

3. **If there are some schools within a school district (i.e., high schools) that do not participate in the NSLP or SBP, should they be excluded from the district file for Direct Certification processing/matching?**
   Direct Certification can only be used to determine student eligibility for receiving meals through the SBP and/or the NSLP. School districts may not use Direct Certification information for the purpose of per pupil funding in those schools that do not participate in the SBP or NSLP. However, if these children are included in the district file, and they do appear on the Direct Certification Match Report, other children in the household (who are attending NSLP and SPB schools) must be extended free eligibility.

4. **May the office(s) responsible for processing Direct Certification data release copies of the lists of certified students to individuals or other school program departments for non-program purposes?**
   The USDA has consistently maintained a policy that the information on the certification for free and reduced-price meal benefits is confidential and may not be released for any non-program purposes.

5. **If a student who is directly certified transfers from one district to another, does that certification also transfer?**
   Yes. Eligibility for free meals that results from Direct Certification does transfer from one district to another.

6. **Is it required that the district retain a copy of the Letter of Notification sent to each directly certified household?**
   No. The district must retain a copy of the prototype Letter of Notification with the district's Policy Statement for Free and Reduced-Price Meals. Note the date the letter was provided

to each household on the list beside the child's name or use another method compatible with the district's existing systems.

7. **What if I receive an application from a family that has been pre-approved through Direct Certification and the income information qualifies them for reduced-price meals?**
   Inform the family that the free benefits determined through Direct Certification can be extended for the entire school year. If the family opts for the reduced price meals, proceed with the 10 calendar day written notice of a decrease in benefits.

8. **How do I handle the distribution of applications for year-round schools?**
   Applications should be distributed on or about the beginning of the school year, or soon thereafter, so that households are provided with current eligibility criteria and so that eligibility determinations are based on the current Income Eligibility Guidelines.

Resources

Child Nutrition Programs, Food and Nutrition Service U.S.Department of Agriculture. August 2014 Eligibility Manual for School Meals Determining and Verifying Eligibility
http://www.fns.usda.gov/child-nutrition-programs

Nebraska Department of Education Nutrition Services. -. *National School Lunch Program - NSLP*. Retrieved -, from Nebraska Department of Education Webs ite: http://www.education.ne.gov/NS/forms/nslpforms/DirectCert.html

Statutory and Regulatory Authority

Statutory authority for the Child Nutrition Programs includes the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (CNA). The statutory citations are, respectively, 42 United States Code 1751 st. seq. and 42 United States Code 1771 et. Seq.

Regulatory authority is found, as follows, in the Code of Federal Regulations, (CFR):
7 CFR Part 210, National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
7 CFR Part 215, Special Milk Program for Children (SMP)
7 CFR Part 220, School Breakfast Program (SBP)
7 CFR Part 225, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
7 CFR Part 226, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
7 CFR Part 245, Determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk in schools

APPENDIX A – Change Summary

Version 1.0.0

- Added Direct Verification

Version1.0.1

- Updated the url from https://cnp.education.ne.gov/ to https://nutrition.education.ne.gov/