*Date:* May 2, 2014

*To:* Authorized Representatives of School Food Authorities Participating in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs

*From:* Jessica Sharkus, RDN, CD Director, School Nutrition Team

*Subject:* Updates to the Web-based Direct Certification Process

**Please forward to staff that are responsible for running Direct Certification**

This memo is to inform you that the Department of Public Instruction School Nutrition Team (DPI SNT), the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF), and Covering Kids & Families-Wisconsin (CKF) have been working together to upgrade the web-based direct certification system. There are a few changes that we would like to highlight below.

As part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, beginning in the 2014-15 school year (SY), all states must offer the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). The CEP is a four year reimbursement alternative for high poverty local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). It is intended to improve access to free school meals in eligible high poverty LEAs and schools, and eliminate the administrative burden associated with collecting household applications.

To utilize the CEP, eligible LEAs and schools would be required to have an identified student percentage of at least 40 percent based on data as of April 1st of the prior school year. Identified students are low-income students who are certified, based on documentation of benefit receipt or categorical eligibility, for free school meals without the use of a household application. This includes students directly certified through the web-based Direct Certification Program (DCP), as well as other students within the same household. More information about the CEP can be found on our website at <http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/fns_cep>.

**Direct Certification Changes**

An eligible LEA would be able to elect the CEP on behalf of a single school, a select group of schools, or all schools under its jurisdiction. In order to determine if a single school or select group of schools are eligible to participate in the CEP, DPI needs eligibility data from each school food authority (SFA) at the school level. Therefore, **all SFAs will now be required to run direct certification to show eligibility by school within the SFA starting in the 2014-15 SY.** In order to meet this site level direct certification requirement, a new ‘School Number’ column will be added to the direct certification input file. Every school within an SFA has an assigned school number (usually 2-3 digits), which can be found in the Wisconsin School Directory. **Important Note**: SFAs that only have one site/school will not need to utilize the school number column and are allowed to leave this column blank.

*Running the Direct Certification File*

There won’t be any changes in the way the file is shared with the state’s DCP. The changes are only in the file layout that the SFA creates to send to the DCP. The SFA will now create a file with the mandatory columns of last name, first name, middle initial, date of birth, **and the school number** (new column for the 2014-15 SY). The ‘School Use’ column will remain as an elective column for SFAs to include other information that may be useful to them, such as a student ID number or other student identifiers. The ‘School Number’ column should be placed at the end of the input file (see layout example below).

Before running direct certification, make sure the columns are in the correct order (without column headings):

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Last Name | First Name | Middle Initial | Date of Birth | School Use  | School Number |

After you have created your student file using the above layout and saved it as Text (tab delimited) format (\*.txt) you are ready to upload your file to the DCP. There are no changes to the upload and match process, the file will be sent and received the same way. Please see the Wisconsin Direct Certification User Guide for step-by-step instructions (<http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/fns_directcert>). The user guide will be updated in July 2014 for the upcoming SY. There will be no changes to the output file you receive from the DCP; the only change is the additional column in the direct certification input file submitted through the matching process. The school number column will be submitted and utilized by DPI to determine identified student percentages for community eligibility.

**The input file layout for the current SY**

Last Name Character data (up to 20 characters)

First Name Character data (up to 15 characters)

Middle Initial Character data (up to 1 character or can be left blank)

Date of Birth Date Format (MM/DD/YYYY)

School Use **Optional** Character data (up to 28 characters)

**The updated input file layout for the 2014-15 SY**

Last Name Character data (up to 20 characters)

First Name Character data (up to 15 characters)

Middle Initial Character data (up to 1 character or can be left blank)

Date of Birth Date Format (MM/DD/YYYY)

School Use Character data (up to 28 characters or can be left blank)

School Number Character data (up to 4 digits or can be left blank)

**The output file for the current and 2014-15 SYs**

School District 999999 Direct Certification File Created On 02/01/2014

BURNS ALEC 03/01/1996 S

HIGGENS DAPHNE 12/21/2009 T

RICE GAVIN 05/02/2005 O

RICE REECE 04/21/2002 E

ROGERS LILLIAN 04/22/2004 E

STEIN ALBERT 12/01/1999 E

WILSON ARIEL 10/02/2004 N

|  |
| --- |
| **If a student software company formats your files for direct certification, please work with them to ensure they have completed any necessary software updates. Enclosed is an additional memo for you to share with your software company providing further details on the direct certification changes. All updates should be completed by June 30, 2014.** |

**Questions/Concerns**

For issues related to the Community Eligibility Provision or Direct Certification, please contact the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issues/Questions** | **Contact** |
| Community Eligibility Provision | Karrie Isaacson, Assistant Director karrie.isaacson@dpi.wi.gov 608-266-2416 |
| Direct Certification | Marisa Voelker  Direct Certification Specialistdirectcert@ckfwi.org 608-890-4783 |