

## Schoolmealsnews Bulletin 1718-08

Announcements from the WI DPI School Nutrition Team (SNT)

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### Reminder! Direct Certification Updates

**Direct Certification with Medicaid Data:** As you are aware, Wisconsin is participating in the USDA National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Demonstration Project to Evaluate Direct Certification (DC) for Free and Reduced Price School Meals using Medicaid Data. School enrollment data is now matched with Medicaid eligibility data to identify children who receive Medicaid, or live with a child who receives Medicaid, and whose family income, before expenses and deductions, does not exceed:

- 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for free school meal eligibility; or
- 185 percent of the FPL for reduced price meal eligibility.

**New Direct Certification Eligibility Codes:** As a result of adding additional eligibility data to the Direct Certification Program (DCP), there are two new codes added to the direct certification eligibility codes for Medicaid-Free and Medicaid-Reduced.

M – Student is identified by the state's Medicaid database at the income level for FREE meals and is automatically eligible.

Z – Student is identified by the state's Medicaid database at the income level for REDUCED price meals and is automatically eligible.

Some points worth noting with these additional matches:

- If a household submits an income application and the information provided qualifies them for free meals, and they showed up in DC as code "Z" (Medicaid –Reduced), the application takes precedence over the DC match, and the student qualifies for the free benefit. The student always receives the best eligibility benefit.
- A Medicaid case number on an application does not qualify students for free or reduced price meals.
- For the fall of 2018-19, some students may be in eligibility carryover status for the first few days of school; however, if they carried free meal benefits last school year and are matched on DC with a Z code, the Z code is considered a NEW eligibility determination and would change their status to reduced, thus ending the 30-day carryover period.

**NEW! Commonly Asked Questions:**

**Q1.** Can students that match with an M (Medicaid-Free) or Z (Medicaid-Reduced) code be extended to other household members?

**A1.** Yes.

**Q2.** If there is a household that has one student that matches with an M code (Medicaid-Free) and another that matches with a Z code (Medicaid-Reduced), does the free benefit extend to all members of the household?

**A2.** Yes.

**Q3.** If a household matches with a Z code (Medicaid-Reduced), but the household also submitted an application that qualifies for free, which benefit does the household get?

**A3.** Households should always get the better benefit. It does not matter how the eligibility is determined. So, in this case, the household is free, based on the application. **We strongly encourage you to contact your software provider to confirm that the system is always applying the best benefit for the household.**

There is no change to how the direct certification input file is formatted as a result of these enhancements. Users will now select whether their file is a Full or Partial run. Select Full Run if the input file includes the list of all students in the district with access to the National School Lunch Program. More information on the direct certification process, file formatting and eligibility codes is located on the [School Nutrition Team Direct Certification webpage](#).

The following is the hierarchy of match codes and eligibilities:

S: SNAP

O: SNAP and W-2 Cash Benefits

T: W-2 Cash Benefits

G: FDPIR (*coming soon*)

E: Foster (does not extend to other household members)

M: Medicaid-Free

Free eligibility based on free and reduced price application

Z: Medicaid-Reduced

Reduced eligibility based on free and reduced price application

N: No match

### **USDA Interim Final Rule entitled Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements**

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published an Interim Final Rule entitled Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements. The regulation is now on public display at the [Federal Register](#). Although published November 30, 2017, the effective date is July 1, 2018, and it is only effective for the School Year (SY)

2018-2019. FNS has opened up a public comment period that will close on January 29, 2018.

The interim final rule includes three main points:

1. It allows Program operators in the NSLP, SBP, SMP, and CACFP the option to offer flavored, low-fat (1 percent fat) milk as part of a reimbursable meal for students in grades K through 12, and for SMP and CACFP participants 6 years of age and older. Schools may also offer flavored, low-fat milk as a competitive beverage for sale. No waiver will be required. However, the interim rule also states SFAs are expected to continue to meet the dietary specifications for these programs.
2. It allows State agencies to continue granting an SFA's exemption request to use specific alternative grain products if the SFA can demonstrate hardship(s) in procuring, preparing, or serving specific products that are acceptable to students and compliant with the whole grain-rich requirement.
3. It retains Sodium Target 1 as the regulatory limit in the NSLP and SBP through the end of SY 2018-2019. Currently, USDA anticipates retaining Target 1 in the final rule through at least the end of SY 2020-2021, to provide SFAs more time to procure and introduce lower sodium food products, allow food industry more time for product development and reformulation, and give students more time to adjust to school meals with lower sodium content.

We encourage you to give feedback to FNS during this comment period. After reviewing all of the submitted comments, FNS anticipates the final rule to be published in fall 2018, and it will be for implementation in SY 2019-2020.

### **USDA Request for Information: Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs**

On Thursday, December 14, 2017, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published a Request for Information (RFI) entitled, Food Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs (CNP). The RFI is now on public display at the [Federal Register](#). In order to claim Federal reimbursement, CNP operators must serve meals and snacks that meet the minimum meal pattern requirements of the respective Program. Crediting is the process designed by FNS to specify how individual food items contribute to the CNP's meal patterns. Several factors impact how food products can credit toward reimbursable meals, such as volume, weight, and overall nutrient profile. The purpose of this RFI is to help FNS gather feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders on how FNS's crediting system can best address today's evolving food and nutrition environment, as well as to offer first-rate customer service to those operating and benefitting from the CNPs.

We encourage you to give feedback to FNS during this comment period. There are 25 questions listed within this RFI to assist responders in considering the many aspects of crediting that FNS would like feedback on. Comment period closes on February 12, 2018. Electronic comments are preferred and may be submitted at [regulations.gov](#).

## **Webinar Let's Celebrate School Breakfast, January 11, 2:00PM CST**

This webinar from Food Research & Action Center asks: Are you ready for National School Breakfast Week (NSBW)? Students, parents, food service staff, educators, public officials, and advocates from across the country will be celebrating school breakfast during NSBW – March 5-9, 2018. [Join this webinar](#) for ideas on how to celebrate and advocate for school breakfast during NSBW and year round.

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This is a communication from the WI Department of Public Instruction, School Nutrition Team.

You can contact the School Nutrition Team at [dpifns@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:dpifns@dpi.wi.gov). To subscribe to schoolmealsnews, please send an email to [join-schoolmealsnews@lists.dpi.wi.gov](mailto:join-schoolmealsnews@lists.dpi.wi.gov)  
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