

“In a Nutshell” Determining Free and Reduced Price Eligibility and Verification Processes - Overview



IMPORTANT WEBLINKS TO GET STARTED

Free and Reduced Price webpage: dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/program-requirements/free-reduced-meal-eligibility
 Verification webpage: dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/national-school-lunch-program/verification
 Direct Certification webpage: dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/direct-certification
 Calendar of Requirements: dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/calendar-of-requirements
 Overview of Free/Reduced/Verification webcast: dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/training/webcasts#fr

RESOURCES FOR THESE PROCESSES

Online Contract for Program Participation: apps2.dpi.wi.gov/FNSWEB/

- Submit in late spring for upcoming year. User ID and password are required.
- Officials have roles in the free/reduced price eligibility and verification process and are listed on the contract: Determining, Confirming, Verifying, and Hearing.

Eligibility Manual: dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/eligibility-manual.pdf

- Provides comprehensive review of federal requirements, policies, and procedures for establishing eligibility.

AFTER JULY 1 - STEPS TO DETERMINE MEAL BENEFITS

Public Release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Around the start of the school year, the public must be notified that free and reduced price meals and/or free milk are available at the School Food Authority (SFA). ○ 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 SFA is not required to pay for printing charges. ○ Submit or post to an employment office in enrollment area and local grassroots organizations such as a food pantry, post office, library, etc.
Direct Certification (DC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ User rights must be requested from DPI for Direct Certification Program (DCP) access. ○ Minimum of three DC runs are required each school year; the first before school begins and after the second week of July. ○ DCP eligibility codes determine free and reduced price meal benefits. See Direct Certification webpage for current codes list. ○ Determining official completes this process.

PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

Applications-Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After July 1, 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.
Applications-Electronic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Applications need to be determined within 10 operating days of receipt; the determining official completes this task. ○ Use current income eligibility guidelines (IEG) to determine the eligibility status of applications.

Household Notifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 List (BI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ List of students that qualify for free/reduced price meal or milk benefits for the current school year. This list must include the student's name, date of eligibility and benefit eligibility status. ○ Update as needed due to changes in student eligibility throughout the school year and after carryover period.
Carry Over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student's eligibility status from the previous year is carried over into the current school year for up to 30 operating (school) days or until a new eligibility is determined, whichever comes first.
Disclosure/Sharing of Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools must seek written consent from parents/guardians to use information provided on applications for all other non-program benefits. 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 certain federal education, state education, or state health programs.
Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Verifying official tracks the verification process using the back of application or tracking tool provided on DPI website. ○ Send out verification letter to household(s), which notifies 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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete the Verification Collection Report online and submit after verification is completed. ○ Due by February 1 each school year.
Record Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Keep all documents three years plus the current school year.