

Date: October 1, 2016

To: Authorized Representatives of School Food Authorities (SFAs) Participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs

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

Subject: Verification of Eligibility for the National School Lunch Program

**Please forward this time sensitive material to the designated
Verifying Official for the SFA**

To maintain the integrity of the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, each SFA must annually verify eligibility of children from a sample of household applications approved for free and reduced price meal benefits for that school year. Verification is only required to confirm eligibility determined through the application process, not through direct certification. Verification must include either confirmation of income eligibility or confirmation that the child is a member of a household receiving assistance under FoodShare, W-2 Cash Benefits, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Verification may include confirmation of any other information required on the application.

To determine which applications are selected for verification, there are three methods established by USDA. All SFAs must use the Standard Sampling Method unless it qualifies to use an alternative sample size method. Based on the results of the Verification Collection Report (VCR) submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in school year (SY) 2015-16, your SFA is approved to choose any of the three (3) sampling methods including: Standard Sampling Method, Alternate One, or Alternate Two.

- **Standard:** Verify three percent (3%) of all applications approved by the SFA for the SY, as of October 1, selected from error prone applications. If there are not enough error prone applications, SFAs must randomly select additional applications to complete sample size.
- **Alternate One:** Verify three percent (3%) of all applications approved by the SFA for the SY, as of October 1, selected at random.
- **Alternate Two:** Verify one percent (1%) of all applications approved by the SFA, as of October 1 of the SY, selected from error prone applications PLUS one-half of one percent (0.5%) of applications approved by the SFA, as of October 1 of the SY, that provide case numbers in lieu of income information.

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Please refer to page 83 in the 2016 *Eligibility Manual for School Meals* (EM) for more information on these methods.

The verification process must be completed by November 15, 2016. The outcome and results of verification are reported annually to DPI utilizing the online VCR and are due by February 1, 2017.

There are many resources and training materials to assist you with verification. The 2016 EM reviews the verification process on pages 79-94. Additional resources and materials can be found on the School Nutrition Team (SNT) website at <http://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/national-school-lunch-program/verification>. It is important to review the verification resources each year as there are often updates and clarifications. Resources available on our website include verification forms, webcasts, instructions for completing the VCR, a link to the updated EM, and a sample of the VCR to print and fill out manually prior to completing online.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the instructions for completing the VCR, which have been updated for SY 2016-17 and includes clarifications and information regarding the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

If your SFA is not able to complete the verification process by November 15, you may request an extension by logging into the VCR site, click on the "Request Waiver" tab and complete the requested information. DPI may approve an extension up to December 15 of the current school year. An extension request beyond December 15 must be approved by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Midwest Regional Office. Extensions will be granted **only for valid reasons** such as natural disaster, civil disorder, strike, or other circumstances that prevent the SFA from timely completion of verification activities.

SFAs participating in a Special Provision (CEP or Provision 2)

If your entire SFA participates in CEP or is in a Provision 2 non-base year, you do not need to complete the verification process; however, the VCR is still required to be completed and submitted by February 1, 2017. The enclosed VCR instructions include directions specific to CEP only.

If only some schools within your SFA participate in CEP, only the non-CEP schools are included in the verification process. Please remember, verification is not required if you are using the Alternate Household Income Form or the USDA Free and Reduced Price School Meal Application and only students in a CEP school are included on the application. A USDA Free and Reduced Price School Meal Application that includes students from both CEP and non-CEP schools, would be part of the verification process since non-CEP students are listed. The outcome of verification is to be reported as usual for non-CEP schools, and CEP schools will be reported in Section 2 on the VCR. Please refer to the enclosed VCR instructions.

Please contact any consultant if you have questions (<http://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/directory>).

Important Verification Dates to Remember

1. Consider a Direct Certification (DC) run at the **end of September**. All DC students are excluded from verification.
2. The sample size determined for verification is based on the number of current applications on file as of **October 1, 2016**. Carryover applications from SY 2015-16 are excluded.
3. The verification process must be completed by **November 15, 2016**.
4. SFAs may begin to report the outcome of verification in the VCR portal beginning **November 1, 2016**. The portal to complete the report is located on the SNT website at <http://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/national-school-lunch-program/verification>.
5. When completing the VCR, the total number of enrolled students is as of **October 31, 2016**.
6. The VCR must be submitted online no later than **February 1, 2017**.