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8. Verification of Eligibility

Overview

Verification is confirmation of eligibility for reduced price and free meals under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Verification does NOT include students who are:

- ◆ Eligible under Direct Certification
- ◆ Certified as migrants, runaways or homeless
- ◆ Foster Children
- ◆ Income eligible for Head Start or Even Start (see Chapter 28 in *Food Service Facts*)
- ◆ Living in residential child care institutions (RCCIs)
- ◆ Approved by local officials based on collateral contacts
- ◆ Students in Provision 2 and 3 schools, not in the base year.

The following sponsors are not required to verify eligibility for reduced price and free Child Nutrition Program benefits:

- ◆ Sponsors participating in ONLY the Special Milk Program
- ◆ Sponsors where all schools participate in Provisions 1, 2 or 3, except in base years

All other sponsors must each year select and verify eligibility of a sample of applications approved for benefits. One person should coordinate verification activities for the sponsor.

Verification of a household's eligibility will result in one of the following outcomes:

- ◆ **No change in benefit level** – The household's documentation supports the level of benefits for which the household has been approved.
- ◆ **Decrease in benefit level** – The household's documentation shows an income level higher than the limit for the benefits for which it was previously approved, or the household does not respond to verification efforts. The household's eligibility must be changed from free to reduced price, from free to paid, or from reduced price to the paid category. All households must be given ten-calendar days advance written notice of the change.
- ◆ **Increase in benefit level** – The household's documentation qualifies the household for free Child Nutrition Program benefits rather than reduced price benefits. The household's eligibility status must be changed immediately from reduced price to free.

Steps in the Verification Process

There are eight steps in the verification process:

1. Count applications and students by eligibility category and report to KSDE using KN-CLAIM's "Pre Verification Worksheet".
2. Select sampling method from options available on the KN-CLAIM Pre Verification Worksheet.
3. Select the number of applications as calculated in the KN-CLAIM Post Verification Worksheet.
4. Complete confirmation reviews of applications in sample.
5. Notify household(s) selected.
6. Review income documentation.
7. Verify eligibility and notify households of changes in benefits.
8. Report results using KN-CLAIM's "Post Verification Results".

Following is detailed information about each step in this process.

1. Count Applications and Students by Eligibility Category

The sponsor is required to report the total number of students eligible and applications on file on October 1 of each year as explained below. If October 1 falls on a weekend, use the next operating day to establish the sample pool.

a. Students eligible for free meals who are NOT subject to verification –

Count total free eligible students in the following categories:

- ◆ Directly certified
- ◆ Certified migrant, homeless, or runaway
- ◆ Foster Children
- ◆ Income-eligible for Head Start or Even Start
- ◆ Residents in a Residential Child Care Institution (RCCI)
- ◆ Non-applicants approved by local officials based on collateral contacts
- ◆ Students in Provision 2 and 3 schools, not in base years

b. Students eligible for free meals based on categorical eligibility –

Count total free eligible students and applications approved based on a case number for any of the following programs:

- ◆ Food Assistance
- ◆ Temporary Assistance to Families (TAF) or
- ◆ Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- ◆ Foster Children

c. Students eligible for reduced price or free meals based on income and household size –

Count TOTAL reduced price or free eligible students and applications approved based on household size and income.

The counts of students and applications should be recorded on Part 1. Verification of Eligibility for Reduced Price and Free Benefits (Form 8-Q) and entered into the Pre Verification Worksheet in KN-CLAIM.

2. Select Sampling Method from options available on KN-CLAIM Pre Verification Worksheet

The required number of applications that must be verified is based on the total number of approved applications on file on October 1 and the sampling method selected. KN-CLAIM will automatically compute the sample size based upon the sampling method selected and the data entered on the sponsor's Pre Verification Worksheet.

There are three verification sampling methods: error-prone, random, and focused.

By August 1 of each year, a sponsor's sampling option(s) will be displayed in KN-CLAIM on the Pre Verification Worksheet for the current school year. A sponsor may choose to verify a random or focused sample **ONLY** if the sponsor had a verification "non-response rate" less than 20 percent in the preceding school year. The verification "non-response rate" is the percentage of household applications selected for verification for which verification information was not obtained by the sponsor by November 15 the previous year. If a sponsor's non-response rate is 20 percent or more, then the sponsor must use an error-prone sample.

Error-Prone Sampling Method

The error-prone sampling method must be used by a sponsor that had a 20 percent or greater verification non-response rate in the preceding school year. The verification non-response rate is the percentage of household applications selected for verification for which verification information was not obtained by the sponsor.

Income eligible and categorically eligible applications are used to compute the sample size. However, categorically eligible applications and directly certified students are excluded from the sample.

Select the sample from the income eligible group. Select "error-prone" applications, which are those with reported income within \$1200 annually, \$100 monthly, \$50 twice per month, \$46 every two weeks, and \$23 weekly of the reduced price or free income guidelines. The selection method must be equitable and ensure that the same households are not selected each year. Verify applications from both the reduced price and free categories.

If the number of error-prone applications exceeds the required sample size, randomly select the sample from the error-prone applications.

If the number of error-prone applications is less than the required sample size, randomly select the additional applications from the other income eligible applications.

Random Sampling Method

The random sampling method may be used **ONLY** by a sponsor that had less than a 20 percent verification non-response rate in the preceding school year. The verification non-response rate is the percentage of household applications selected for verification for which verification information was not obtained by the sponsor.

The random sample should include both income eligible and categorically eligible applications. Selecting only categorically eligible applications is not permitted. Students directly certified are excluded from the sample.

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Document method used to select applications and file with verification documents.

Examples:

1. A selection interval may be used. Divide the total number of approved applications on file by the number of applications needed for verification as indicated in KN-CLAIM Post-Verification Results.

Example: 340 applications on file divided by 11 (the number of applications that must be verified).

$340 \div 11 = 30.9$ or 31 (the selection interval is every 31 applications).

First, randomly select an application from the total pool. Then beginning with the selected application, chose every 31st application until 11 applications have been selected.

2. Request that a co-worker randomly select specified numbers between one and the total number of applications in the pool

Example: 340 applications on file with 11 applications needing to be verified.

Have a co-worker select 11 numbers at random, between 1 and 340.

Select the applications that correspond with each of the numbers selected by your co-worker.

3. Place all the applications in a container or face down on the table and draw the required number of applications.

Focused Sampling Method

The focused sampling method may be used **ONLY** by a sponsor that had less than a 20 percent verification non-response rate in the preceding school year. The verification non-response rate is the percentage of household applications selected for verification for which verification information was not obtained by the sponsor.

A minimum of one income eligible application and one categorically eligible application (i.e. eligible based on a reported Food Assistance/TAF/FDPIR/Foster Child case number) **must** be verified. Students directly certified are excluded from the sample.

Compute the sample size for income eligible applications. Multiply the total number of approved applications (including income eligible applications and categorically eligible applications) by .01 (1 percent).

Select the sample from the income eligible group. Select “error-prone” applications, which are those with reported income within \$1200 annually, \$100 monthly, \$50 twice per month, \$46 every two weeks, and \$23 weekly of the reduced price or free income guidelines. The selection method must be equitable and ensure that the same households are not selected each year. Verify applications from both the reduced price and free categories.

If the number of error-prone applications exceeds the required sample size, randomly select the sample from the error-prone applications. If the number of error-prone applications is less than the required sample size, randomly select the additional applications from the other income eligible applications.

Compute the sample size for categorically eligible applications. Multiply the total number of categorically eligible applications by .005 (1/2 percent). Select the sample from the categorically eligible group.

Regardless of the sampling method used, the sponsor must ensure that procedures are equitable and that the same households are not selected year after year.

This paragraph applies ONLY to sponsors with 20 or more applications to be verified. The law permits the sponsor, based on an individual review of the applications selected for verification, to choose not to verify a maximum of five percent of applications in the selected sample. When declining to verify applications, sponsors should consider factors such as household stability and communication difficulties. The verifying official should document on the application the reason(s) for not proceeding with verification. Any application that is removed from the verification sample must be replaced with another application. The eligibility determination of the replacement application must be confirmed as explained in Step. 4.

3. Select the Number of Applications as Calculated in the KN-CLAIM Post Verification Worksheet.

KN-CLAIM will automatically compute the sample size based upon the sampling method selected and the data entered on the sponsor's Pre Verification Worksheet. Once the Pre Verification Worksheet is submitted, go into the Post Verification Results screen to see the number of applications that must be verified.

Sponsors are encouraged to begin verification before October 1. Estimate the number of approved applications the sponsor will have this year, based on the number of applications from previous years. Use the KN-CLAIM Pre Verification Worksheet to calculate the estimated sample size. On October 1, update the Pre Verification Worksheet with the actual count of applications on file and adjust the sample size, if necessary.

Sponsors must verify at least as many applications as calculated for the sample size, but may verify no more unless the additional applications are verified "for cause". Applications selected "for cause" are verified in addition to those selected for the sample (i.e. error-prone, random, focused).

4. Complete Confirmation Reviews of Applications in Sample

The sponsor must designate a "confirming official" who is someone other than the determining official. The confirming official is responsible for reviewing the initial eligibility determinations of applications selected for verification. The requirement to complete confirmation reviews will be waived if the sponsor is using a "technology-based solution" that demonstrates a high level of accuracy in processing initial eligibility determinations. The sponsor must contact KSDE to determine if its system qualifies for this waiver.

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Refer to the following table for a summary of actions to be taken following completion of confirmation reviews. When a change in benefit level results from a confirmation review, send the household the appropriate notification letter (Form 8-M or 8-N).

Initial Determination	Confirmed Determination	Action Required
Reduced Price	Paid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify household of change in benefit level. Remove application from verification pool and select another application to be verified.
Reduced Price	Reduced Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request verification documentation from household.
Reduced Price	Free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify household of change in benefit level. Request verification documentation from household.
Free	Paid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify household of change in benefit level. Remove application from verification pool and select another application to be verified.
Free	Reduced Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request verification documentation from household.
Free	Free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request verification documentation from household.

Sample Size

Q-1 *If the sample size is 4.2 applications, do I verify 4 or 5 applications?*

A Five. Decimals must always be rounded up to the next whole number when determining the verification sample size.



Q-2 *Is the verification sample selected by school or from the sponsor as a whole?*

A A sponsor is required to select and verify a sample of its approved reduced price and free applications. The sample must be selected from all of the sponsor's applications.



Q-3 *If October 1 falls on a weekend or a day when school is not in session, on what date should the count be taken?*

A Sponsors should count applications and students eligible the next operating day following October 1.

5. Notify Households Selected

Income Households

Households with eligibility based on income must be notified in writing of their selection for verification and of the types of income documentation that are acceptable. Use the Letter to Household about Selection for Verification (Form 8-D) for this purpose.

The notification letter must provide a toll-free phone number that households may use for assistance during the verification process. There are several ways to accomplish this. The sponsor may:

- Establish a toll-free number.
- Allow the household to reverse the charges (i.e. call collect).
- Provide different telephone numbers for each local calling area served.

It is recommended that sponsors allow at least 10 days to two weeks for the household to provide written documentation of eligibility benefits

The sponsor should determine the appropriate person to respond to requests for verification assistance. The household must be able to contact an official who can either directly assist them or can refer the caller to a specific person for help. If the household member is unable to obtain assistance during his/her initial call, the sponsor must attempt to initiate further contact.

Households selected for verification must provide the names of all household members. This information is obtained on Form 8-F.

When notifying households of selection for verification, in addition to the notification letter provide the following forms:

- ◆ How to Prove Eligibility (Form 8-E)
- ◆ Household Members' Names (Form 8-F)
- ◆ Confirmation of Earnings (Form 8-G) – Use of this form is optional. Households may ask employers to complete this form when paycheck stubs are not available.

Categorically Eligible Households

Categorically eligible households are approved for free benefits based on a reported case number for Food Assistance, Temporary Assistance for Families (TAF) or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) or foster children. Food Assistance and TAF benefits are administered by the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS). FDPIR is provided through an Indian tribal office. Foster children documentation is provided by the State child welfare agency or court.

Direct Verification

Direct verification allows a sponsor to directly contact SRS to verify a household's receipt of Food Assistance or TAF. The sponsor may also contact the local tribal office to confirm a household's receipt of FDPIR. The State or local foster agencies may be contacted to confirm foster children's status. It is not necessary to notify the categorically eligible household that its eligibility is being directly verified.

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Sponsors that verify eligibility through the local SRS office, Indian tribal office, or State or local foster agency should do so as early as possible. This will ensure that there is sufficient time for the office to respond to the request and adequate time to acquire other verification if necessary.

After selecting categorically eligible applications to be verified, use the following forms to directly verify each household's eligibility:

- ◆ Direct Certification – Print the Direct Certification documentation from the KN-CLAIM Direct Certification listing the student's names on the document.
- ◆ Direct Verification Request (Form 8-H) – Complete this letter to request information from the SRS, tribal office, or State or local foster agency.
- ◆ Verification of Food Assistance/TAF/FDPIR/Foster Child Benefits (Form 8-I) – Complete this form to provide SRS, or the tribal office, or the State or local foster agency with information about the categorically eligible households selected for verification.

Send a copy of the above letter and form to the regional SRS, tribal office, or the State or local foster agency. An official will complete the form, sign and return it to the sponsor.

The SRS, tribal official, or State or local foster agency completing the form will indicate that:

- ◆ The child was eligible for Food Assistance, TAF or FDPIR benefits or was a foster child at any time from the month of application for free school meals up to the current date. Verification is considered complete.

OR

- ◆ The child was NOT eligible for Food Assistance, TAF or FDPIR benefit or was not a foster child at any time from the month of application for free school meals up to the current date.

The sponsor will send the household the Letter to Household about Termination of Food Assistance/TAF/FDPIR/Foster Child Eligibility (Form 8-J). The household is then considered an "income household" (instead of a categorically eligible household) and the steps for verification of income households will be followed.

Direct Notification to Households

Categorically eligible applications may also be verified by notifying the households directly. Use the Letter to Household about Selection for Verification (Form 8-D) for this purpose.

The notification letter must provide a toll-free phone number that households may use for assistance during the verification process. There are several ways to accomplish this. The sponsor may:

- Establish a toll-free number.
- Allow the household to reverse the charges (i.e. call collect).
- Provide different telephone numbers for each local calling area served.

Households selected for verification must provide the names of all household members. This information is obtained on Form 8-F.

When notifying households of selection for verification, in addition to the notification letter provide the following forms:

- ◆ How to Prove Eligibility (Form 8-E)
- ◆ Household Members' Names (Form 8-F)
- ◆ Confirmation of Earnings (Form 8-G) – Use of this form is optional. Households may ask employers to complete this form when paycheck stubs are not available.

6. Review Income Documentation

Sponsors must complete the verification process for all households that have been notified of their selection. For example, a sponsor cannot select five percent of the applications on file and notify those households of their selection with hopes of getting three percent to respond. Once households have been requested to provide documentation of eligibility, the sponsor must complete the verification process for these households.

Verification methods include obtaining:

- ◆ written evidence
- ◆ collateral contacts
- ◆ Direct Verification (i.e. confirmation of eligibility from SRS, KN-CLAIM Direct Certification, Indian tribal office or State or local foster agency)

In most cases, sponsors will obtain written evidence from households selected for verification. Sponsors **must** use the Verification Worksheet (Form 8-K) to document each household's verification.

Written Evidence

Written evidence is information received directly from the household, such as pay stubs or proof of Food Assistance/TAF/FDPIR participation. Whenever possible, written evidence should be used as the primary source of information to confirm household eligibility.

When providing written evidence of income, households must submit documents dated within a month prior to application and the time of verification. Sources of acceptable types of written evidence to be used for income documentation are outlined in How to Prove Eligibility (Form 8-E).

The documents should contain the name of the household member, the amount of income received, the income frequency, and the date income was received. A pay stub with no date is not sufficient.

Income to be reported by households is gross earned income, which includes any money received on a recurring basis. Gross income means all money earned before income tax, Social Security, insurance premiums or other deductions are withheld.

A household receiving Food Assistance or TAF can document its current eligibility by providing a copy of an official letter or notice indicating that the child or any household member is receiving benefits from that program.

Collateral Contacts

A collateral contact is a person outside of the household who is knowledgeable about the household's circumstances and can give confirmation of a household's income and household size, or its Food Assistance/TAF/FDPIR status. Collateral contacts include employers, social service agencies, migrant workers' agencies and religious or civic organizations. The verifying official should request a collateral contact **ONLY** in cases when the household has not been able to provide adequate written evidence.

Unacceptable Documentation

Income tax forms are **NOT** considered acceptable proof of income except for households with irregular income (i.e. farmers, seasonal workers, self-employed persons, etc.). In these cases, tax forms may be used to project the amount of income the household expects to receive for the current year.

Documentation for Food Assistance/TAF/FDPIR households that does not specify the certification period is not adequate proof of participation. For example, the Food Assistance identification card is not acceptable because it does not have an expiration date.

7. Verify Eligibility and Notify Households of Changes in Benefits

After notification is sent to households and they have been asked to submit verification of eligibility, one of the following four outcomes will result:

1. **Benefits Decrease:** The household complies with the request and provides information, but the evidence shows the household is eligible for a lower benefit level than was previously determined or the household indicates, verbally or in writing, that they no longer wish to receive benefits. Verification is considered complete when the household is sent the Letter to Household about Benefit Decrease (Form 8-M), and is provided ten-calendar days written notice of the change in eligibility status. Benefits must be changed on the specified date.
2. **Benefits Increase:** The household complies with the request and provides information, but the evidence shows the household is eligible for a higher benefit level than was previously determined. Verification is considered complete when the household is sent the Letter to Household about Benefit Increase (Form 8-N) and increased benefits are provided immediately.
3. **Benefits Do Not Change:** The household complies with the request and provides information that confirms the eligibility determination previously made. Verification is considered complete. Sponsors may inform households by sending the Letter to Household about No Change in Benefits (Form 8-O).
4. **Household Does Not Respond or Submits Incomplete or Obsolete Information:** The sponsor must attempt to contact the household at least one additional time to request the missing information and notify them that failure to comply will result in termination of benefits. The sponsor may contract with a third party to assist with the required follow-up activity. Any third party is subject to the confidentiality requirements outlined in Chapter 6 of *Food Service Facts*.

The follow-up attempt(s) may be made through the mail, by telephone, by e-mail, or through personal contact. The sponsor must document on the Verification Worksheet (Form 8-K) any attempts and the results, if any. If the sponsor is unable to verify the household's eligibility status after the follow-up attempt(s), the household's benefits must be terminated through a Letter to Household about Benefit Decrease (Form 8-M).

Verification is considered complete when the sponsor receives adequate information to determine eligibility and the household is sent the appropriate notification letter:

- Letter to Household about Benefit Decrease (Form 8-M).
- Letter to Household about Benefit Increase (Form 8-N), or
- Letter to Household about No Change in Benefits (Form 8-O),

All households for which benefits are to be reduced or terminated must be given ten-calendar days advance written notice of the change. The first day of the notice period is the day the Letter to Household about Benefit Decrease (Form 8-M) is sent.

If the household does not appeal, the benefits must be reduced or terminated on the specified date. When household appeals a reduction of benefits within the ten-calendar days advance notice period, the sponsor must continue to provide the benefits for which the child was originally approved until a final determination is made. Ensure that meal program accountability is updated on the date indicated on the Letter to Household about Benefit Decrease 8-M and Letter to Household about Benefit Increase Form 8-N. Use the Notification to Attendance Center about Change in Eligibility Status Form 8-L to facilitate making eligibility changes.

8. Report Results using KN-CLAIM's Post Verification Results

The sponsor must complete verification of the minimum required sample size by the verification completion deadline, November 15.

Form 8-Q, Part 1 Pre Verification Worksheet and Part 2 Post Verification Results, is intended to be used as a worksheet. The information on this form must be entered by the sponsor into KSDE's KN-CLAIM computer system by December 15 each year. The data is entered on the "Post Verification Results" screen which is very similar to Form 8-Q. KSDE may need to update the form and related computer screens frequently to respond to changing requirements from USDA. Be sure to use the form issued by KSDE for the current school year.

The Application for CNP Benefits is the official document from which eligibility is determined. Therefore, when the eligibility category changes the status change must be documented on the application and on rosters, databases and the medium of exchange used for meal accountability.

Record Keeping

Verified applications must be readily retrievable by school. The sponsor must keep the following documentation on file to demonstrate compliance with the verification requirements:

1. Copies of all documents submitted by the verified households, or by collateral contacts, or by agencies completing direct verification
2. Documentation of all relevant correspondence/contact between the households and the sponsor
3. Copies of the applications selected for verification
4. The completed Pre Verification Worksheet (Form 8-K) for each household verified.
5. Post Verification Results (Form 8-Q) – It is not necessary to retain a written copy of this worksheet once the data has been entered in the KN-CLAIM computer system.

Verification for Cause

An application may be verified at any time during the school year after it has been approved. The sponsor has an obligation to verify any application that contains questionable information. However, any verification that is done “for cause” is **in addition** to the required sample. Only the minimum required number of applications must be verified by the deadline, November 15.

Foster Child’s Application

Q *What kind of written evidence is required for verification of a foster child’s application?*

A If the foster child’s name cannot be found on KSDE’s Direct Certification website, ask the foster family and/or the placement agency for a copy of written communication in which the status of the child and the financial arrangement is stated.



Verification Documentation Dates

Q *Am I to verify eligibility at the time of application or at the time of verification?*

A Households must be allowed to provide documentation of income for any point in time between the month prior to application and the time of verification.



Income from Overtime

Q *How is overtime income counted for verification purposes?*

A The verifying official should work with the household to determine whether the overtime for the month being verified is representative of overtime received in other months. If the overtime is a one-time or sporadic source of income, income should be calculated based on the regular monthly income (i.e. without overtime). Looking at “year to date” totals on paycheck stubs may help determine if overtime income is sporadic or regular. The household may provide additional check stubs to reflect frequency of overtime income.



Income from Multiple Sources

Q *If a household reports income from several sources (i.e., salary, child support and self-employment) must they provide evidence for each source of income?*

A Yes. Verification of all income sources is required. In general, anything considered as income for the initial application process is also considered as income for verification purposes, and documentation for such income is required. There should also be documentation of the loss of an income source, such as a lost job.

Weekly Income

Q *If a household is paid weekly and submits a pay stub for a week, must I go back and ask for pay stubs for a whole month?*

A Pay stubs for a whole month are not required. However, two consecutive pay stubs are required.



Household Moves

Q *What if an application is selected for verification, but the household transfers out of the school or district before the information can be verified?*

A If a household selected for verification transfers out of the school or district before the information can be verified, verification cannot be completed. To meet the minimum verification requirements, a new application must be selected.



Benefits During Notification Period

Q *When a Notification to Household of Benefit Decrease (Form 8-M) letter has been sent, can I claim reimbursement for reduced price or free meals served to the child during the ten-day period before the benefit is decreased?*

A Yes. During this ten-day period, the child continues to be eligible for reduced price or free Child Nutrition Program benefits and the sponsor may continue to claim reimbursement for these meals.



Seasonal Worker

Q *Is a seasonal worker, such as a teacher's aid or school cook, eligible for reduced price or free meal benefits based on income during the summer months when the person was not working?*

A A seasonal employee has regular income for most months of the year. To determine "current monthly income", divide the annual income by 12 months. Although the individual may not have received a check in July or August, zero income should not be reported for these months. Instead, the application should either be approved on a temporary basis or the household should be asked to provide documentation of its annual income.

Benefits During Appeal of Verification Results

Households have the right to a fair hearing concerning the reduction of meal benefits due to verification activities. When a household appeals a reduction of benefits within the ten-calendar day advance notice period, the sponsor must continue to provide the benefits for which the child was originally approved until a final determination is made.

When a household does not appeal a reduction of benefits during the ten-calendar day advance notice period, the actual reduction of benefits **must** take place immediately after the ten-calendar day advance notice period.

Hearing Procedure

The hearing procedure outlined in Chapter 15 of *Food Service Facts* must be followed. The designated hearing official must be an individual who is not involved with the approval or verification process. The decision of the hearing official must be based on the income documentation provided by the household and the current Income Eligibility Guidelines. Following the hearing, the household should be notified in writing within five days of the decision using the Letter to Household Following Hearing (Form 8-P).

Households that Reapply for Program Benefits

A household that is terminated for failing to respond to verification efforts may reapply for Child Nutrition Program benefits in the same school year. However, at the time of reapplication they **MUST** provide either income documentation or proof of participation in Food Assistance/TAF/FDPIR. The sponsor must verify the households' eligibility prior to approval.

Reminders

- ◆ Verification must take place **after** the application has been approved, even when the sponsor requires households to submit documentation of eligibility or the household provides documentation with the application.
- ◆ Round all decimals upward when determining the required sample size of applications to be verified.
- ◆ Each household application counts as only one application, regardless of the number of students included on the application.
- ◆ Sponsors must verify at least as many applications as calculated in the KN-CLAIM Post Verification Worksheet but may verify no more, unless an application is verified “for cause”. Selection must not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.

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- ◆ An application may be verified “for cause” at any time during the school year after it has been approved. Only the minimum required number of applications must be verified by the November 15 deadline.
- ◆ The sponsor must complete the verification process for all households that have been notified of their selection for verification and have been asked to submit verification information.
- ◆ If the household does not respond to a request for verification information, the sponsor is required to make at least one additional attempt to obtain the verification information from the household. The method and results of the contact should be documented and copies of all correspondence with the household kept on file.
- ◆ A household that does not respond is given another opportunity to respond when the Letter to Household about Benefit Decrease (Form 8-M) letter is sent.
- ◆ If a household selected for verification transfers out of the sponsor’s program before the information can be verified, verification cannot be completed. To meet verification requirements, a new application **must** be selected.
- ◆ If verification results in an increase in benefits (i.e. a child is changed from reduced price to free meal benefits), this change is effective immediately, but no later than three operating days. Parents/guardians should be notified of the change in benefits as quickly as possible. See Letter to Household about Benefit Increase (Form 8-N).

Verification Forms and Letters

Use the letters and forms provided in *Food Service Facts* to ensure that all required information has been included. Keep copies of all correspondence with households on file for review or audit.

Meeting the Verification Deadline

Verification is an annual requirement. The verification completion deadline is November 15. This deadline is the same whether it falls on a weekday or weekend.

The minimum sample size of applications to verify is based on the total number of approved applications on the “verification count date”, October 1. The verification official is not required to wait until the count date to begin. Sponsors are encouraged to begin as early as possible. Do not wait for a reminder from KSDE to begin the verification process.

Food Service Facts – Chapter 8, Verification of Eligibility

To prevent overlooking the verification count date and deadline, KSDE recommends that sponsors:

- ◆ Mark October 1 (application count date) and November 15 (verification completion deadline) on the school calendar of events or a calendar noting other important dates and deadlines.
- ◆ Ensure that more than one person is aware of the completion deadline and of the verification requirements and/or assign an alternate verification official. This will help to ensure timely completion of verification even if one of the assigned staff is unavailable.
- ◆ Develop a written verification plan that includes the methods to be used and the time frames by which each step must be accomplished. The basic plan can be used year after year and can be given to new personnel to help them complete the process more easily in their first year of responsibility for verification.
- ◆ Allow sufficient time for SRS or the Indian tribal office to verify household eligibility. Thirty days is the minimum a sponsor should allow when using direct verification.

If verification cannot be completed by the deadline, a written request for an extension of the verification deadline is required. The request must be submitted to Child Nutrition & Wellness, KSDE and must be approved in writing.