



Child Nutrition & Wellness

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Distributed to School Nutrition Program Authorized Representatives and Food Service Directors

USDA Issues Significant Change in Free Meal Eligibility Policy

In a memo dated August 27, 2009, USDA changed its guidance on situations where at least one, but not all, children in a household are eligible for free meals based on a case number for Food Assistance (formerly Food Stamps), Temporary Assistance for Families (TAF) or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). These policy changes do NOT apply to other categorically eligible students including those in Head Start, the Migrant Education Program, and those categorized as homeless or runaway.

The following new provisions are effective immediately:

1. If a household's **Application for Child Nutrition Program Benefits** lists at least one child with a Food Assistance, TAF or FDPIR case number, ALL of the students listed on the application are automatically eligible for free school meals regardless of household income. If this policy change causes additional children to be eligible for free meals, please do the following.
 - The determining official should update the household's Application for CNP Benefits by indicating the new eligibility status, and initialing and dating the change.
 - Send the household Form 3-D, Notification of Eligibility to inform them of the additional student(s)' free meal eligibility.
 - Free meal eligibility is effective on the date Form 3-D is sent to the household.
2. If at least one student in a household is eligible for free school meals based on KSDE's **Direct Certification letter or list**, all students in the household are automatically eligible for free school meals.
 - Use the sponsor's enrollment records to identify additional students with the same parent/guardian and address as is on KSDE's direct certification letter or list.
 - Send the household Form 7-B, Letter to Household about Free Meal Eligibility which informs them of each additional student's eligibility and provides the opportunity to decline free meals. This new form is available at www.kn-eat.org, School Nutrition Programs, Guidance, Food Service Facts, Chapter 7.
 - Free meal eligibility is effective on the date Form 7-B is sent to the household.

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3. If a student's eligibility for free school meals (based on Food Assistance/TAF/FDPIR eligibility) is carried-over into the new school year, **newly enrolled siblings are eligible for free meals during the carry-over period.** Eligibility is effective on the date documentation is completed. To document carry-over eligibility of newly enrolled siblings, please do the following:
 - a. Carry-over based on last year's **Application for Child Nutrition Program Benefits:**
 - The newly enrolled sibling's name is on the application. On last year's Application for CNP Benefits, the determining official should highlight or circle the newly enrolled sibling's name; and initial and date by the name.
OR
 - The newly enrolled sibling's name is NOT on the application. On last year's Application for CNP Benefits, the determining official should add the newly enrolled sibling's name in RED; and initial and date by the name.
 - b. Carry-over based on last year's **Direct Certification list:**
 - The newly enrolled sibling's name is on the Direct Certification list. On the copy of Form 7-A sent to the household last year, the determining official should add the newly enrolled sibling's name in RED; and initial and date by the name. On the Direct Certification list, highlight or circle the newly enrolled sibling's name.
OR
 - The newly enrolled sibling's name is NOT on the Direct Certification list. On the copy of Form 7-A sent to the household last year, the determining official should add the newly enrolled sibling's name in RED; and initial and date by the name.
 - c. Carry-over based on last year's **Direct Certification letter:**
 - The newly enrolled sibling's name is on the Direct Certification letter. On last year's Direct Certification letter, the determining official should highlight or circle the newly enrolled sibling's name; and initial and date by the name.
OR
 - The newly enrolled sibling's name is NOT on the Direct Certification letter. On last year's Direct Certification letter, the determining official should add the newly enrolled sibling's name in RED; and initial and date by the name.

This new guidance has not yet been incorporated into Chapter 7 of *Food Service Facts*. You will be advised when the chapter has been updated.

If you have questions about this guidance, please contact Jodi Mackey (785-296-2276 or jmackey@ksde.org) or your KSDE area child nutrition consultant.