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**To:** District Superintendents  
Superintendents of Schools  
Chief School Officers of Nonpublic Schools  
Executive Directors of Residential Child Care Institutions  
Chancellor, New York City Schools  
School Food Service Directors/Managers

**FROM:** Frances N. O'Donnell, Coordinator

**SUBJECT:** Free and Reduced Price Meal Application *Income Verification*

## **NEW INFORMATION FOR 2004-2005 SCHOOL YEAR**

Current federal regulations require that all school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the School Breakfast Program or National School Lunch Program select and verify a sample of their approved free and reduced price meal applications by December 15 of each year. To assist schools in the verification process, a "Fact Sheet" outlining the procedures to be followed is included in this booklet.

As you are well aware, income eligibility obtained for the child nutrition programs is used for a great many initiatives and programs. As more and more persons, programs and agencies rely on this data, the validity of this information becomes more significant.

Verification is confirmation of eligibility for free and reduced price meals. The intent of this process is to confirm the accuracy of the application information. The application/verification process is being intensely scrutinized at the federal level as verification often results in a substantial number of changes in eligibility. This occurs when a family either fails to respond or cannot substantiate what they reported on their application. Consequently, verification requirements have become more stringent in order to improve the fiscal integrity of the child nutrition programs and the verification process. It is essential that verification efforts be completed in a timely manner, that any changes in eligibility are implemented for all family members and that adequate records of your efforts are maintained.

1. Correctly approved applications are effective for the entire school year. This change will impact your verification efforts. If a family selected for verification submits information that confirms either their income, receipt of food stamps or temporary assistance to needy families (TANF) eligibility for the time period beginning the month before they applied through the time the application is verified (prior to December 15), the child's eligibility remains in effect. This time period is June 1 for schools beginning in July and August 1 for schools beginning in September. You do not need to change and must not change their status to reduced or paid if the family substantiates they were eligible for the free benefit when they applied. This is true even if the information received proves they are no longer eligible when the application

is verified. If the documentation provided during verification confirms the child's eligibility on the application was accurate when the family originally submitted it, the child's benefits are not to be altered. Verification is completed for that application.

2. Homeless and runaway children who are categorically eligible for free meals because the McKinney-Vento school district liaison has notified you of their status as well as migrant children who are categorically eligible for free meals because the district's Migrant Education Program coordinator has documented their eligibility should not be verified. The district's liaisons or coordinators for these purposes can simply provide you with the child's name, date and their signature. No application should be obtained for these children. They also are eligible for free meals for the full school year even if their status changes.

3. SFAs are encouraged to follow up with families who do not respond to verification efforts. You must change eligibility status to full price or paid for all the children of the non-responders. Your goal should be to get your number of non-responders down to less than 20 percent of your total number of applications to verify so you have more flexibility in how you will conduct verification in 2005-06.

4. The reporting document (attachment G) has changed due to a final rule published September 11, 2003. SFAs must report new data elements to the State agency and the states in turn must analyze and summarize the data and send it on to USDA. This new required data will enable State agencies and USDA to better understand certification errors and to improve oversight activities. This will help to ensure that free and reduced price subsidized meals are provided only to eligible children. State agencies will need to target more rigorous oversight activities to SFAs whose verification activities result in a high termination rate.

Only USDA required elements are requested on Attachment G. Be sure you review it carefully so as to capture the required information that documents your SFA's efforts.

5. Provision 2 schools must report data annually.

A summary of the results of the verification process must be completed on the Income Verification Documentation form (Attachment G) and **returned to this office by January 15, 2005.** The form may be completed on line at <http://www.nysed.gov/cn/cnms.htm>, faxed or mailed to our Albany office. Failure to submit a completed Income Verification Documentation form at the Child Nutrition Office of the New York State Education Department by January 15, 2005 will result in your child nutrition programs being placed on reimbursement hold. Verification must be completed by the SFA no later than December 15, 2004.

Requests to extend the December 15th deadline must be submitted in writing to the State Education Department. We then must submit the request to USDA. All such requests must document extenuating circumstances beyond the SFAs control and should be received by our office by November 18, 2004.

### **VERIFICATION CHANGES FOR 2005-06**

The following are just some of the verification changes for 2005-06. All changes will be discussed during the November 2004 Reauthorization Meetings.

- Verification will be based on applications on file October 1 instead of October 31.

- Verification efforts will need to be completed by November 15 instead of December 15.
- Verification will be conducted on three percent or 3,000 applications (whichever is less), and will be conducted on error prone applications rather than a random selection. These error prone applications must be those where reported income is within \$100 of the monthly income or \$1,200 of the annual income.
- Prior to conducting any verification activity, an individual other than the original reviewing official must review for accuracy each application selected for verification. This is to ensure that the applications were correctly approved.
- The letter to households informing them they are selected for verification must include a toll free number for parents to obtain assistance. This can be a local number within the district.
- The local education agency (LEA) must make at least one attempt to contact non-responders.
- There are certain exceptions to the error prone sampling.
- LEAs can contract with a third party to make additional attempts to follow up with non-responders.

### WHAT TO DO FOR 2004-05

- **Start early.** Allow yourself enough time to complete the verification process by the December 15 deadline. Estimate the number of applications (pieces of paper) you expect to have on file by October 31 and begin early. Then on November 1, determine the actual number of applications to be verified, and select as many more as may be necessary. While you may verify more than the required number, you may not verify less.
- **Do not include Direct Certification letters from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in the total applications to be verified. Verification efforts are not required for children who have been certified under direct certification procedures. This includes those certified by a computer match with your local Department of Social Services.**
- Do not include migrant children who have been identified by the district's Migrant Education Program.
- Do not include runaway or homeless children who have been identified by the district's McKinney-Vento school district liason.
- **Always round upward** when determining the number of applications to be verified. For example, 106 approved applications are on file October 31, choosing the Random Sampling Method, you must verify 3 percent, or 3.18 applications, which rounded up becomes 4 applications.
- Income-eligible households completing an application for free or reduced price meal benefits must provide the social security number of the adult who signs the application or an indication that he/she does not have a social security number. If the application is selected for verification, the family must provide the social security number of each adult household member 21 years of age or older in addition to written evidence of current income for all household members. The prototype parent letter explaining this requirement and information which must be provided to households selected for verification is included in Attachment A pages 1-3.

- SFAs must take the following actions if the household fails to cooperate with verification efforts:
  - Prior to actual reduction in benefits or termination of benefits, 10-calendar days advance notification must be provided to the household.
  - The first day of the 10 calendar days advance notification must be the day the notice is sent to the household.
  - The notice must advise the household of a change in benefits, reasons for the change, the right of appeal, how and when the appeal must be filed, and that the household may reapply for meal benefits.
- We are encouraging SFAs to select focused sampling for verification. You will verify far fewer applications, however your efforts will be targeted to those families who are most likely to misrepresent income.
- Reductions or changes in benefits must be extended to all children in the household who were determined to be eligible by information that no longer supports the benefit level.
- Program regulations require SFAs to maintain a description of their verification activities which must include:
  - a summary of the verification efforts, including the selection process;
  - the total number of applications on file on October 31; and
  - the percentage or number of applications that have been verified.

In addition, verified applications must be readily retrievable by building. **For each application verified, records documenting the source of information used to verify the application must be retained. This may include a wage stub or documentation from employer or collateral contacts.** You may document and/or note information directly on the application when contacting families for further information. A separate sheet of paper can also be attached.

The following information **must** be documented:

- Copies of all relevant correspondence between the household selected for verification and the school. The SFA **must** retain either all documents submitted by the household or reproductions of those documents. If the document cannot be kept, the verifying official **must** make a written record of the documents submitted, including the type of document (wage stub, letter from employer), income shown, time period of the income, and the date of the document. Any changes in eligibility as a result of verification, including the reasons for the changes, the changes, and the date the changes were made.
- All program records must be retained on file for three years plus the current year.
- Verification efforts are not required:
  - For children who have been certified under direct certification procedures and those identified as runaway or homeless and migrant children.
  - In residential child care institutions (RCCIs), with the exception of RCCIs with day

students, where eligible students must complete an application.

- In schools in which all students are served without a separate charge for food services and the school only claims **paid** reimbursement.
  - In schools participating in the Special Milk Program only.
  - For those schools in the second year of Provision 1.
  - For those schools in the non-base years of Provision 2. They must however, report data annually.
- Increases in program benefits (e.g., reduced price to free) must be made within three calendar days. Decreases in program benefits (e.g., free to paid) must be made within 10 calendar days.
  - All applications selected for verification must be resolved, even if the SFA selects more applications to verify than is required. All families selected must provide information that verifies or confirms their eligibility or the families must be informed formally in writing that their benefits will change.
  - If a family's benefits are reduced due to verification (e.g., because they failed to respond or didn't submit sufficient information to substantiate their income) and during the school year the family re-applies, the SFA **must** verify the application prior to the family being approved for benefits. If the family refuses to provide the required information, free or reduced price benefits must be denied.

The following attachments are provided to assist you in the verification process.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A page 1 of 3 - LETTER TO HOUSEHOLDS-NOTIFICATION OF SELECTION FOR VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY**
- Attachment A page 2 of 3 - SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS**
- Attachment A page 3 of 3 - VERIFICATION INFORMATION FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS**
- Attachment B page 1 of 2 - LETTER TO THE FOOD STAMP/TANF/FDPIR OFFICE FROM THE SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITY**
- Attachment B page 2 of 2 - VERIFICATION FORM - FOOD STAMPS/TANF/FDPIR RECIPIENTS (MULTIPLE APPLICANTS)**
- Attachment C - LETTER OF VERIFICATION RESULTS AND CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY FOR INCOME HOUSEHOLDS**
- Attachment D - LETTER OF CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY FOR FOOD STAMP/TANF/FDPIR HOUSEHOLDS**
- Attachment E - NOTIFICATION OF CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS AS A RESULT OF VERIFICATION**
- Attachment F - VERIFICATION SUMMARY/RECORDKEEPING**
- Attachment G - FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEAL APPLICATION - INCOME VERIFICATION DOCUMENTATION FOR 2004-05 AND DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETION**
- Attachment H - ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**

It is suggested that Attachment A (pages 1–3) be sent to households selected for verification. The other attachments are available to be used as needed.

If you have questions, contact your respective Child Nutrition Representative (refer to last printed page of this booklet) or Lindsey Osterhout at [losterho@mail.nysed.gov](mailto:losterho@mail.nysed.gov).

## FACT SHEET FOR VERIFICATION OFFICIALS

**Verification is the confirmation of eligibility for free and reduced price benefits under the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program.** Verification must substantiate income eligibility or current participation in the Food Stamp, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) programs. At local discretion, verification may also include confirmation of any other information on the application which was required as a condition of eligibility. The following is an outline of the minimal requirements for completion of the verification process:

### **CERTIFICATION:**

**Application:** Obtain all current income information identified by source, frequency, and household member, except for Food Stamps/TANF/FDPIR households.

**Food Stamp households:** Households may submit their food stamp case number or family electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card and a receipt from a purchase within 30 days of dated request for income information. The receipt will confirm the last four digits of their food stamp number. However, some households may need to report both food stamp/TANF/FDPIR case numbers and income information, if some children in the household are not eligible for food stamp/TANF/FDPIR benefits.

### **VERIFICATION:**

**Sample date:** Final verification sample size is based on approved applications on file as of October 31 of each school year. (An application is counted as **one** application regardless of whether it is a multi-child application or an application for one child.) Sample selection and verification may begin earlier based on projections done by school officials. Verification must take place after the application has been approved.

**Sample method:** Each school food authority (SFA) must select **one** of the two following methods to satisfy the verification requirement. SFAs may verify more than the required minimum sample, up to 100 percent, as long as the selection of applications does not involve discrimination against anyone on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability. **Do not count direct certification letters in determining your sample size or in the verification process. Eligibility of those children whose names appear on the letter has already been verified by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Also, do not count those identified as runaway or homeless and migrant children.**

**Random sample** - The lesser of 3 percent or 3,000 of the total number of approved applications selected randomly. A random sample should include both income-eligible and categorically eligible applications for children receiving FDPIR benefits or children receiving TANF/food stamp benefits whose names do not appear on the direct certification letter from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

Random sampling could be accomplished as follows using an SFA with 340 approved applications as an example:

1. Count the total number of approved applications on file on October 31. Multiply the total by .03. **Round decimals upward.** At least one application must be verified Example: 340 applications x .03 = 10.2 applications. Round upward to 11 applications. Eleven applications must be verified to meet the required sample size.
2. Randomly select the required number of applications. Duplicate applications should not be included in this process.

- 1) A selection interval may be used. This can be accomplished by dividing the total number of approved applications on file by the sample size to determine the selection interval.

Example: If there are 340 applications on file and 11 are required to be verified, divide 340 by 11 = 30.9. In this case, the selection interval is 31. Number all applications. Randomly select an application from the total and then choose every 31st application until 11 applications have been selected.

- 2) Another possible method would be to randomly select the required number of applications from all the applications on file.

**Focused sample** - The lesser of 1 percent or 1,000 of the total number of approved applications selected from non-food stamp/TANF/FDPIR households with incomes nearest the eligibility levels, plus the lesser of .5 percent or 500 of approved applications which substituted a food stamp/TANF/FDPIR case number for income information. Do not include direct certification letters in your counts.

**Focused sampling** could be accomplished as follows (using an SFA with 900 approved applications which includes 600 food stamp/TANF/FDPIR households for this example):

1. Count all approved applications, including food stamp/TANF/FDPIR households to determine the number required to fill the 1 percent non-food stamp/TANF/FDPIR sample size (1 percent x 900 = 9).
2. Separate applications into two groups, non-food stamp/TANF/FDPIR and food stamp/TANF/FDPIR households.
3. From the non-food stamp/TANF/FDPIR group, select the sample of households (9) that report monthly income within \$100 below the income eligibility limit or \$1,200 annually and proceed to verify their income. Select the remainder to be verified from applications closest to the threshold.
4. From the food stamp/TANF/FDPIR group, determine the number required to fill the .5 percent sample size (.5 percent x 600 = 3).
5. Submit a list of the selected names and case numbers to the food stamp TANF/FDPIR office for confirmation of current receipt of food stamps/TANF/FDPIR or request a current "Notice of Eligibility" from the household.

**Verification of food stamp/TANF/FDPIR households** consists of confirming current receipt of food stamps (only for children not included in direct certification letters), TANF or FDPIR benefits for each child listed. The verification official will need to send the list of names to the local Department of Social Services. Families receiving food stamps and/or TANF will have difficulty providing documentation to confirm current eligibility status for verification purposes. The benefit issuance card they received no longer contains a date to substantiate current eligibility status. If households completing a family application report income information for children who are not eligible for benefits, this income information would also need to be verified.

**Follow-Up:** The SFA must complete the verification process for all households notified of their selection and asked to submit verification information. Any household which fails to submit requested verification information by the date specified by the SFA, or which submits verification information which does not support the initial determination of eligibility, must be sent a notice that benefits will be reduced or terminated in 10 days as appropriate. If the household provides information that confirms their eligibility within the 10 days, the family will continue to receive benefits. If there is no response, benefits must be terminated on day 11. Households that appeal the reduction or termination of benefits within the 10-day notice must continue to receive benefits until the decision of the hearing official is made.

### **THE INCOME VERIFICATION FORM (Attachment G)**

**Completion:** (1) All verification activity must be completed by December 15. (2) Attachment G must be submitted to Child Nutrition Program Administration office by January 15, by mail, FAX or on-line through the Child Nutrition Web Site (<http://www.nysed.gov/cn/cnms.htm>). Programs will be placed on reimbursement hold until such time as the required information is received.

**It is essential** to cooperatively discuss and work out a mutually effective and efficient means for handling requests for verification of current Food Stamp participation by school officials and school meal applicants with local Food Stamp offices. Below are the current legislative requirements should you need to refer to them.

1. Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act, as amended, by Public Law 97-35, Provides that proof of Food Stamp Program participation is adequate confirmation of a household's eligibility to receive free and reduced price benefits.
2. Section 169 of Public Law 97-253, amended Section 11 of the Food Stamp Act of 1977 to authorize State Food Stamp agencies to release information concerning the current status of Food Stamp recipients to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of the provisions of the Food Stamp Act, regulations issued, Federal assistance programs or federally assisted State programs. Since the National School Lunch Program is clearly a "Federal assistance program," this provision authorizes the release of information concerning the current status of Food Stamp Program participants to school food authorities.

## Questions and Answers About Verification

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

A. Verification is considered complete when a household's eligibility for the level of benefits for which it was approved is either confirmed or the household is sent a letter of change in eligibility. If a household selected for verification transfers out of the district before the information can be verified, verification cannot be completed. To meet the minimum verification requirements, a new application **must** be selected.
2. **Q. What if I use other agency records and the agency does not provide a response before December 15?**

A. The family's benefits must be terminated. Any extensions to the December 15 deadline **must** be approved in writing by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service through the State Education Department. Start your process early and advise agencies of the importance of replying promptly.
3. **Q. How is overtime income counted for the purpose of verification?**

A. The school 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, it should not be used in calculating regular income.
4. **Q. Am I verifying eligibility at the time of application or current eligibility?**

A. Verification is intended to establish eligibility for any point in time between the month prior to application and the time the household is required to provide income documentation. When written evidence or collateral contacts are the primary sources of information, the school must require submission of income information for the **full month at the time of application**. However, if the family income decreases making them eligible for increased benefits, then the school should verify current income.
5. **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. No. If the weekly pay stub is representative of what the household normally receives each week, one pay stub is sufficient.
6. **Q. If a SFA chooses to do 3 percent verification, must it select 3 percent of the applications from each school within the SFA or from the SFA as a whole?**

A. SFAs are required to select and verify a sample of their approved free and reduced price applications. The SFA as a whole **must** meet the 3 percent sample requirement. This

does not mean that each school has to do 3 percent. The sample may be selected from one or more schools or from the SFA as a whole **provided** that the verification efforts are applied without regard to race, sex, color, national origin, age, or disability.

7. **Q. If my sample size is 4.2 applications, do I verify 4 or 5?**
- A. Decimals **must** always be **rounded up** to the next whole number. Therefore, you must verify 5 applications.
8. **Q. Do we have to maintain the actual documentation from verification or just the results of verification?**
- A. You are required to maintain a description of your verification efforts, including the selection process, the total number of applications on file on October 31, and the percentage of applications that were/will be verified by December 15. In addition, the applications selected must be readily retrievable by school, and the SFA must document correspondence between the selected households and the school. The verification official must retain either the documents, a photocopy, or annotations which indicate which documents were submitted by the household and the date of submission. You must also keep a record of any change in eligibility as a result of verification procedures, the reason for the change, and the date the change was made.
9. **Q. When a notice of adverse action has been sent to a household, may I claim reimbursement for that child during the period covered by the notice?**
- A. Yes. The household must be given 10 calendar days advance notice that a change is being made in the child's eligibility status. During that time, the child must continue to receive free or reduced price meal benefits and the SFA may continue to claim reimbursement for free or reduced price meals served to the child during this period.
10. **Q. If an SFA chooses to select more than 3 percent or the minimum number required of households to verify, and some of those households fail to respond, has the SFA completed the verification requirement as long as 3 percent or the minimum number required of the households respond?**
- A. No. All households selected for verification must either respond or have benefits terminated after appropriate notification.
11. **Q. If an SFA implements the National School Lunch Program after December 1, 2004, must the school complete the verification process?**
- A. No. Not for the 2004-05 school year. Verification is based on applications on file as of October 31. The SFA would be required to complete verification in 2005-06.
12. **Q. If an application has three sources of income, how many should be verified?**
- A. All sources of income must be verified.
13. **Q. What if the SFA forgets to do verification?**

- A. Verification is an annual requirement. We will contact an SFA that hasn't submitted Attachment G on time. The SFA can lose its State and federal reimbursement for meals served after December 15.
14. **Q. When should an application be verified "for cause"?**
- A. If an SFA is informed, even anonymously, that an applicant may not be eligible, the SFA must follow up on the allegation using the verification process. The SFA has an obligation to verify all questionable applications (applications that are reported to be fraudulent or suspicious). Verification that is done for cause, is in addition to the sample required for either random/focused sampling. Verification must take place after the application was approved on the face value of the application.
15. **Q. What information must be mailed, faxed or submitted on line to the Child Nutrition Program office by January 15?**
- A. The Child Nutrition Program Administration office must receive a copy of the verification worksheet (attachment G). All other verification documentation, along with a copy of the verification worksheet, should be kept on file for three (3) years plus the current year. SFAs in Provision 2 must retain all verification information for three years plus the current year after the end of their provision cycle that used the information.
16. **Q. What if a foster child application is randomly selected for verification?**
- A. School officials should contact the household in which the foster child resides and ask for the name, agency and phone number of the social worker assigned to that child. A phone call to the social worker confirming the child's status as a foster child and the amount of money designated by the Agency for the child's personal use is sufficient. Another approach is to ask the foster family for a copy of written communication from the placement agency in which the status of the child and the financial arrangement is stated.
17. **Q. What should I do if a family was approved for free based on a food stamp number but sends in a pay-stub for verification that makes them ineligible?**
- A. Contact the family to determine if they can document their food stamp eligibility for the month prior to submitting their application. If they can document their eligibility at that time, the free benefits must continue. If the required documentation is not provided, the income stub must be used to determine their eligibility.
18. **Q. What if I receive an application for a child and then receive the child's name on a list from the Migrant Education Program Coordinator?**
- A. The application should be discarded and should not be included in determining the number of applications on file. The child should not be selected for verification.
19. **Q. Would a temporarily approved application (zero income) be included in the number of applications on file to be selected for verification?**

- A. Yes, only exclude the direct certification letters and those identified as homeless, runaway or migrant children by the district's liaison or coordinator.



**SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS**

If you do not show that you now get food stamps, TANF, or FDPIR for your child, you must send in: (1) documentation verifying your current household income, and (2) the name and social security number of each household member 21 years of age or older. Write the word "none" if an adult household member does not have a social security number.<sup>1</sup>

**Names of adult household members**

**Social Security Number**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Privacy Act Statement** Unless you list the child's food stamp, FDPIR, or TANF case number, Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act requires that you include the social security number of the household member signing the form or indicate that the household member signing the form does not have a social security number. You do not have to list a social security number, but if a social security number is not listed or an indication is not made that the adult household member signing the form does not have a social security number, we cannot approve the form. The social security number may be used to identify household members in verifying the correctness of information stated on the form. This may include program reviews, audits and investigations and may include contacting employers to determine income, contacting a food stamp, FDPIR, or TANF office to determine current certification for food stamps, TANF or FDPIR benefits, contacting the State employment security office to determine the amount of benefits received and checking the documentation produced by the household member to prove the amount of income received. These efforts may result in a loss or reduction of benefits, administrative claims or legal actions if incorrect information is reported. The social security number may also be disclosed to programs as authorized under the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act, the Comptroller General of the United States, and law enforcement officials for the purpose of investigating violations of certain Federal, State and local education, health and nutrition programs.

**VERIFICATION INFORMATION FOR FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS**

Provide information or documents which show your household's current income, or income for the month prior to when you applied for program benefits for the 2004-05 school year. If you receive income from more than one source, you must provide documentation for each source. Examples of types of documents are listed below. You may also provide a letter(s) from your income source(s) stating the amount and frequency of income you receive and who received it.

**The papers you send in must show: (1) the amount of the income received, (2) the name of the person who received it, (3) the date the income was received, and (4) how often the income is received.**

To show the amount of money your household received last month, send copies of the following:

- ◆ **Earnings/wages/salary for each job:** Current paycheck stub that shows how often it is received; current pay envelope that shows how often it is received; letter from employer stating gross wages and how often they are paid; business or farming papers, such as ledger or tax books
- ◆ **Social security/pensions/retirement:** Social security retirement benefit letter; statement of benefits received; pension award notice
- ◆ **Unemployment compensation/disability or worker's compensation:** Notice of eligibility from State employment security office; check stub; letter from worker's compensation
- ◆ **Welfare payments (General Assistance):** Benefit letter from welfare agency
- ◆ **Child support/alimony:** Court decree; agreement; copies of checks received
- ◆ **All other income:** If you have other forms of income (such as rental income) send information or papers that show the amount of income received, how often it is received, and the date received
- ◆ **No income:** If you have no income, send a brief note explaining how you provide food, clothing and housing for your household, and when you expect to receive income

If you have any questions, or need help in deciding the kind of information to provide, please call \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.  
(name) (school address)

**LETTER TO THE FOOD STAMP/TANF/FDPIR OFFICE  
FROM THE SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITY**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

The receipt of food stamps, TANF, or FDPIR automatically qualifies children for free school meals. The regulations for the Food Stamp Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) permit Food Stamp, TANF, and FDPIR offices to release eligibility information to administrators of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs to ensure that only eligible children receive free meal benefits.

Enclosed is a listing of approved free meal applicants who have been selected for verification and who have indicated that the child for whom application was made now receives food stamp, TANF, and/or FDPIR benefits. On the enclosed listing, please indicate whether these household members are participating in the Food Stamp, TANF, or FDPIR Program or were eligible in August 2004. This information will be used only to confirm the approved applicant's eligibility for free meal benefits.

Please return this listing by \_\_\_\_\_. A self-addressed return envelope is also enclosed for your convenience. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at telephone number \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number

Enclosure (Verification Form-Food Stamp/TANF/FDPIR Recipients)



**LETTER OF VERIFICATION RESULTS AND CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY  
FOR INCOME HOUSEHOLDS**

Child/Children's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

We have completed verification of your child/children's eligibility for school meal benefits. Starting on (10 calendar days from the date sent) your child/children's eligibility for meal benefits will be:

\_\_\_\_\_ Changed from free to reduced price because your income is over the allowable amount. The reduced price charge is \_\_\_ cents for lunch and \_\_\_ cents for breakfast.

\_\_\_\_\_ Stopped for the following reason(s):

- Your income is over the allowable amount for free or reduced price meals.
- You did not provide proof of current eligibility or eligibility for the month prior to when you applied for benefits. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Changed from reduced price to free immediately because your income is within the free meal eligibility limits. Your child/children will receive meals at no charge.

If you are not eligible for benefits now, but have a decrease in household income, become unemployed, or have an increase in the size of your household, you may fill out an application at that time to reapply for benefits. You will be asked to provide documentation of your household income before your application can be approved.

If your benefits have been reduced or denied based on current income and you can supply documentation that confirms the information on the application for the month prior to when you applied, your benefits will remain the same for this school year.

If you do not agree with the decision, you may discuss it with \_\_\_\_\_ (verifying official). You also have the right to a fair hearing. If you request a hearing by (date), your child/children will continue to receive free or reduced price meals until the decision of the hearing official is made. You may request a fair hearing by calling or writing the following official:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

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The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14<sup>th</sup> and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Attachment D**

**LETTER OF CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY FOR FOOD  
STAMP/TANF/FDPIR HOUSEHOLDS**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Available records show that at this time your household is not getting food stamps or TANF or is not participating in the FDPIR.

To continue benefits for your child/children you must submit documentation that you received food stamps or TANF benefits when you submitted your application **OR**

1. Complete a new application with income information,
2. Write the name and social security number of each adult household member on the attached sheet of paper, and
3. Submit papers that show your household's current income.

Your child's/children's free school meal benefits will be stopped on (insert the date 10 days from the above date) unless we receive this information. Any continued free or reduced price meals will depend on your current household income or the receipt of information confirming receipt of food stamps or TANF at the time the application was submitted.

If you do not agree with the decision, you may discuss it with \_\_\_\_\_ (verification official) \_\_\_\_\_. You also have the right to a fair hearing. If you request a hearing by (date 10 days from date sent), your child/children will continue to receive free or reduced price meals until the decision of the hearing official is made. You may request a fair hearing by calling or writing the following hearing official:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are not eligible for benefits now, but your household circumstances change, you may fill out an application at that time and reapply for benefits.

Sincerely,

Enclosures (form for Social Security Numbers/Verification Information for Free and Reduced Price Meals, new application)

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**Attachment E**

**NOTIFICATION OF CONTINUATION OF BENEFITS  
AS A RESULT OF VERIFICATION**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for cooperating with the (name of school food authority) in its verification of eligibility for school meal benefits. The materials you have sent are sufficient for us to verify that your child is eligible for the meal benefits he or she is receiving.

We appreciate your cooperation and support during this process. If you have any questions concerning our program, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,

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VERIFICATION SUMMARY/RECORDKEEPING

Date Selected: \_\_\_\_\_

Selection Method:

Response Due: \_\_\_\_\_

Focused

Random

Second Notice Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

100 percent

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Date Reduction/Termination Notice

Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Food Stamp/TANF/FDPIR Household Confirmed:

Income Household

Food Stamp/TANF/FDPIR Office

Monthly Income: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Wage Stubs

Written Documents

Collateral Contacts

Agency Records

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Not Confirmed:

Eligibility not confirmed

Verification Result: Attach another sheet if more space is needed.

No Change     Reduced to Free     Free to Reduced     Ineligible

Family members affected and date change is made \_\_\_\_\_

Name/date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name/date

Reason for Change:

High Income

Food Stamp/TANF/FDPIR Eligibility Not Confirmed

Refused to Cooperate

Other

Signature of Verifying Official: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_