

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM (NSLP)

School Year 2011 - DIRECT CERTIFICATION

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has now been Directly Certifying Categorically Eligible Students throughout Nebraska for over 12 years. Students are Eligible for FREE lunches if they are living in households with incomes equal to or under 130% of the Federal Poverty Level. This is determined by **Household Lunch Program Applications** to the schools or by "**Direct Certification**".

Direct Certification: Children are deemed "**Categorically Eligible**" for FREE meals without the need for Household Lunch Program Applications if they receive benefits under other **Means-Tested** programs. They must be certified directly by either the **Local Education Agency (LEA)** or Statewide by NDE. In Nebraska there are two program lists supplied by the **Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)** that NDE uses for this determination:

SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Formerly Food Stamp Program (FS).

TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families - Formerly Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC or ADC).

*The 2004 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act **REQUIRES** all Local Education Agencies to establish a system of Direct Certification by School Year 2008-2009 of children from households that receive benefits from **SNAP** or Food Stamps.*

Direct Certification eliminates paper work and is based on computer matching lists of children who are receiving benefits from the above two program to **Student Enrollment Lists** uploaded by school districts into the **Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS)** or into the CNP Website. For school year 2011 non-public schools that are not entering data into NSSRS must send their enrollment figures to NDE in the following manner:

1. **Non-Public School Districts** must upload student enrollment lists for School Year 2011 in the form of a Comma Separated Values (CSV) file OR Excel spread sheet saved as csv. The file is uploaded to the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Application and Claims website <http://cnp.education.ne.gov>. The format and field listing are in a TEMPLATE file that can be download from here: <http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ns/forms/nslpforms/Dctemplate.xls>
2. **Public School Districts** must enter student enrollment information for School Year 2011 into the Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS) **and** in order to process new students not entered into NSSRS, they may upload current student enrollment lists to CNP in the form of a Comma Separated Values (CSV) file OR Excel spread sheet saved as csv. You may download the template file from the above url. The csv file should be received by NDE no later than July 31st for this year's processing.

NDE "**Qualifies**" the matched students and a list is stored on the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Application and Claims website <http://cnp.education.ne.gov>. The schools will then receive an email broadcast about August 15th that the files are posted and they can download the "Qualified List" and notify the children's parents or guardians that they are **AUTOMATICALLY** eligible for FREE meals.

This school year (2011) **ALL LEAs** are statutorily mandated to Directly Certify all Categorically Eligible children for free meals. Households in Nebraska are sent letters for SNAP and TANF benefited children **Not Matched** to the school enrollment lists. These letters serve as **PROOF** of Categorical Eligibility for Free meals but the letters must be forwarded to schools and this requires action by Parents and Guardians. This year NDE will use the NSSRS system for the state-wide Direct Certification program for Public Schools. Any school can opt to Directly Certify students on a local level but they would have to get the list of Categorically Eligible children locally.

Note: NDE recently received a \$200,000.00 grant from USDA to create a new statewide Automatic Direct Certification and Direct Verification-Medicaid Matching System (DCVMS) which is in the Design and Development stages and should be active for School Year 2012. More information will be forthcoming soon.