

School Nutrition Programs: Free & Reduced-Price Verification Instructions SY23-24

Verification is the process by which schools confirm the eligibility of a sample of approved free and reduced-price meal applications. Schools will report the verification results and October eligibility data on the School Food Authority (SFA) Verification Collection Report in [MAPS](#) (under the 'Application' menu). Please carefully read through these instructions to ensure reporting accuracy. Additional instructions can be found in the [USDA's Eligibility Manual](#).

Important Verification Dates:

October 1	(1) Record Oct 1 st Application Counts (2) Calculate Sample Size (3) Send Household Notification Letters
October 31	Record Student Counts as of October 31 (section 4 column B).
November 15	Deadline to collect household documentation/complete the verification process.
November 30	Submit Verification Report in MAPS starting Nov 1. Report Deadline November 30.

October 1 (1) Record Application Counts (2) Calculate Sample Size (3) Send Household Notification Letters

Section 4 Column A - Record the categories of applications on file as of October 1st to determine the pool of applications subject to verification

Student counts (column B) will be captured as of October 31.

4-1 Tip: Categorically Free Eligible – Record the number of categorically free applications (SNAP, TANF, FDPIR or Foster Care categories) only if NOT Directly Certified from DCA and therefore included in the pool subject to verification. Applications confirmed as directly certified must be counted in Section 3 only as proof of their eligibility source program has already been confirmed and therefore not subject to verification. Do not duplicate counts. Direct Certification supersedes a paper application and SNAP-direct certs are given top preference.

3% Sample Size – Calculate the Number of Applications to Verify

The applications listed in section 4 are subject to verification because proof of eligibility has NOT been established.

- Total the number of **applications** in section 4, column A.
 - This is the number of applications in the pool subject to the verification process.
- Multiply the total number of applications in section 4 by .03 (3%).
 - Round all decimals up to the next whole number.**
 - This calculation equals the number of applications you will need to verify.

3% Calculation - Example

Approved Applications
as of Oct 1st

Section 4	Students approved as FREE or REDUCED PRICE eligible through a household application	**ALL SFAs collecting applications must report Section 4**	A. Number of Applications
		4-1: Approved as categorically FREE Eligible: Based on those providing documentation (e.g. a case number for SNAP, TANF, FDPIR on an application)	1
		4-2: Approved as FREE eligible: Based on household size and income information	24
		4-3: Approved as REDUCED PRICE eligible: Based on household size and income information	17

Total number of Applications in section 4 (Column A) multiplied by 3% =

In this example 2 applications should be randomly selected for the verification process

$$\begin{array}{r}
 42 \\
 \times 00.03 (3\%) \\
 \hline
 = 1.26 (2) \text{ (round all decimals up)}
 \end{array}$$

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Method of Verification - Item #33 of MAPS Sponsor Application

Dependent upon on the percent of household applications that responded to last year's verification process. If during last year's verification process:

- **80% or more of the household's responded**, your district may conduct the Random (**Alternate One**) method and randomly select 3% of the approved applications on file to verify.
- **Less than 80% of the household's responded**, your district is required to conduct the Error Prone (**Standard**) method and select the 3% of applications to verify from those considered "error-prone".
 - Error-Prone Applications – Applications within \$100 per month of the Income Eligibility Guidelines.

Draw the 3% verification sample from applications subject to verification (section 4)

Send Verification Letters

- Before sending verification letters, a Confirmation Review must be conducted to ensure accuracy of the initial determination.
 - Must be a person other than the official who made the initial eligibility determination
 - Document the confirmation review by the "confirming signature" line of the selected application
- Send the "We Must Check Your Application" letter to selected household(s)
Tip: Use the Verification Activity Tracker worksheet to document the process
- **Nov 15 - Deadline to gather/confirm household's proof of eligibility responses**
 - Households have 10 days to reply
 - If no reply, follow-up contact at least 1x (document)
 - Districts with low response rates will be subject to error-prone method the following year
- Send the prototype "We Have Checked Your Application" letter to households
 - If verification results in higher benefits (e.g., changing from reduced-price to free category), the change is effective immediately and must be implemented no later than 3 operating days later
 - If verification results in reduced or terminated meal benefits, households must be given 10 calendar days' written advance notice of the change (continue benefits for 10 calendar days)
- Document household responses/nonresponses in section 5-8 on the Verification form

October 31 Record Student Counts

Report the number of approved **students** as of October 31st for each category (Sections 1 – 4 Column B) and record counts on the [Verification form](#). An updated direct certification report should be reviewed on or just prior to October 31st.

1-1: Enrolled Student Counts – Enter the number of (A.) OPI School Sites and (B.) Total enrolled students as of **Oct 31**.

1-2: Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs) must enter the number of sites and students enrolled for each type. Then check items 3-1, 5-1 and save changes to submit the report.

Section 2: This section is applicable to CEP schools only

2-3: CEP Sites – Enter the number of (A.) Schools and (B.) Students participating in CEP

If ALL school sites are CEP, check items 3-1 & 5-1 and you are finished.

If only SOME of the school district's sites participate in CEP, report as follows:

- Section 3-2: Report SNAP-only direct certification data for the schools NOT participating in CEP/Provision 2
- Report remaining fields and all other applicable Sections for schools NOT participating in CEP/Provision 2

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Section 3-B: Student Counts - Directly Certified as of Oct 31

Students in Section 3 are NOT subject to verification because proof of eligibility has already been confirmed. Students can only be counted as being in one category

3-1: Leave 3-1 blank (unless *all* school sites are CEP/Provision 2 or RCCI)

3-2 B: Students SNAP Directly Certified in DCA (SNAP Direct Cert supersedes all other eligible categories)

When a student is Directly Certified through DCA that eligibility supersedes all other information on file (such as household application or letter from the SNAP agency) and the student should be counted as directly certified. If a student is directly certified with SNAP and another program (e.g. Foster Care), SNAP should be given preference. Directly Certified students are not subject to the verification process as proof of eligibility has already been confirmed. Students can only be counted in one category.

Item 3-2 will auto-populate the number of SNAP DC from DCA as of Oct31 in the MAPS system. Please review for accuracy.

3-3 B: Students Directly Certified by other source categories: TANF, FDPIR, homeless, migrant, runaway & foster (proof of participant eligibility confirmed by source or through DCA system). *This item will also auto-populate a count from DCA.*

3-4 B: Categorically Free Students by household submission of SNAP letter only. SNAP Letters that were also validated in the DCA system as directly certified should be counted in 3-2 B as SNAP directly cert only (do not count in both places).

		ALL SFAs must report Section 3 or check box 3-1 if applicable	
Section 3	Students approved as FREE eligible NOT subject to verification	3-1: <input type="checkbox"/> Check the box only if all schools and/or RCCIs in the SFA were not required to perform direct certification with SNAP (i.e. NON BASE year Provision 2/3 for all schools)	B. Number of FREE Students
		3-2: Students directly certified through Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Do not include students certified with SNAP through the letter method.	97
		3-3: Students directly certified through other programs: Include those directly certified through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or Medicaid (if applicable); those documented as homeless, migrant, runaway, foster, Head Start, Pre-K Even Start, or non-applicant but approved by local officials. DO NOT include SNAP students already reported in 3-2.	11
		3-4: Students certified categorically FREE eligible through SNAP letter method: Include students certified for free meals through the family providing a letter from the SNAP agency.	0

Section 4-B: Student Counts – Categorical/Income Free & Reduced as of Oct 31

4-1 B: Categorically Free Students - Application listing a Case Number only (SNAP, TANF, FDPIR or Foster Care)

Students reported as Categorically Free have NOT been confirmed as Directly Certified in DCA and are subject to the verification process because proof of eligibility has not been confirmed by source records.

Categorically Free Students that have been confirmed in DCA are considered Directly Certified and should be recorded in section 3.

4-2 B: Report the number of Free Income based Students

4-3 B: Report the number of Reduced-Price Students

		ALL SFAs collecting applications must report Section 4		A. Number of Applications	B. Number of Students
Section 4	Students approved as FREE or REDUCED PRICE eligible through a household application	4-1: Approved as categorically FREE Eligible: Based on those providing documentation (e.g. a case number for SNAP, TANF, FDPIR on an application)		1	3
		4-2: Approved as FREE eligible: Based on household size and income information		24	35
		4-3: Approved as REDUCED PRICE eligible: Based on household size and income information		17	30

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Section 5 – Verification Process & Results

5-1: Only check the box if **all** school sites are exempt from the verification process. Types of schools exempt to the Verification process include CEP, Provision 2, Residential Child Care Institutions and Milk only.

5-2: Household documentation and correspondence must be completed by November 15th.

If you are unable to complete the verification process by November 15, the district must submit a written request to this deadline. See the Verification Deadline Extension Request form online.

5-3: For further information, see page 2 for the Method of Verification details and reference the Eligibility Manual

5-4: Only report the number of Error-Prone Applications on **if during last year's verification process**, less than 80% of the households responded and your district is required to conduct the Alternate One/Error-Prone method.

5-5: Report the number of Applications Verified

- This number should reflect the calculation on page 1
 - Total of Section 4 Column A multiplied by 3% - round all decimals up
- This number should also equal the total number of verified applications in Section 5-8

ALL SFAs must report Section 5 or check box 5-1 if applicable 5-1: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check the box if ALL schools and/or RCCIs are exempt from verification (see instructions for list of exemptions). If 5-1 is checked, no further reporting in Section 5 is required.			
5-2: Was verification performed and completed? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, completed by November 15th <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, completed after November 15th <input type="checkbox"/> No, verification was NOT performed or the process was not completed.	5-3: Type of Verification process used: 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Standard (Lesser of 3% or 3,000 error-prone) 2. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alternate one (Lesser of 3% or 3,000 selected randomly) 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Alternate two (Lesser of 1% or 1,000 error prone applications PLUS lesser of one-half of one percent or 500 applications with SNAP/TANF/FDPIR case numbers)		
If 1 or 3 is checked in 5-3, report 5-4. If 2 is checked in 5-3, enter	5-4: Total ERROR PRONE applications: Report all applications as of October 1st considered error prone	5-5: Number of applications selected for verification sample:	2

5-6: Direct Verification – Using records from public agencies to verify proof of income and/or program participation From the application(s) *selected for the verification process*, if none were validated as directly certified in DCA or confirmed with agency records, check the box.

5-7: Confirmed through Direct Verification - Only report counts in this section if the *applications selected for the verification process* were directly verified/confirmed with agency records (in DCA).

ALL SFAs must report 5-7 or check box 5-6 if applicable 5-6: <input type="checkbox"/> Check the box if direct verification was not conducted in the SFA, (i.e. not one of the schools and/or RCCIs in the SFA performed direct verification). If 5-6 is checked, skip 5-7.		A. Number of Applications	B. Number of Students
Report if FREE and/or REDUCED PRICE eligibility is confirmed through	5-7: Confirmed through		

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Nov 30 Submit Verification Report in MAPS System

Submit the SFA Verification Collection Report online through [MAPS](#). The electronic Verification Report will be available in MAPS November 1st-30th. Paper Versions Will Not Be Accepted. The [PDF/paper version of the form](#) is available as a worksheet only.

Locate the Verification Report in MAPS:

1. Select the 'Application' menu
2. Then click on the 'Verification Report'

The screenshot shows the 'School Nutrition Programs' interface with the 'Applications' menu highlighted. Below the menu is a table of items:

Item	Description
Application Packet	Applications Forms (Sponsor and Site)
Verification Report	Mandatory Annual Verification Report
Second Review of Applications	FNS-874 report for Sponsors selected to conduct a second review of applications.
Food Safety Inspections	Number of Food Safety Inspections by Site
FFVP Grants	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grants
FFVP Grant Overview	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Grant Information by Site Overview
Site Enrollment	Site Student Enrollment and Free/Reduced Eligibility from October Claim
Community Eligibility Provision	Enrollment and Eligibility for Community Eligibility Provision
Document Library	Library containing downloadable documents and urls

3. Click **Modify** Next to SY 2023-2024

The screenshot shows the 'Verification Report' page for 'Happy Trails K-12 Schools'. It includes school details and a table of actions:

8801 Status: Active
Happy Trails K-12 Schools
 DBA: Peaceful County Treasurer
 555 406th Street
 Happy Valley, MT 59999
 Type of Agency: Educational Institution
 Type of SNP Organization: Public

Action	School Year	Received Date	Status
Modify	2022 - 2023		Not Started
View	2021 - 2022	03/15/2022	Submitted
View	2020 - 2021	03/15/2021	Submitted
View	2019 - 2020	01/24/2020	Submitted
View	2018 - 2019	11/28/2018	Submitted

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4. Fill out all applicable fields
5. Click **Save** at the bottom of the form when done.

The screenshot shows a web application interface for "School Nutrition Programs" with a "MONTANA Agreement and Payment System" logo. The navigation bar includes "Applications", "Claims", "Compliance", "Reports", "My Training", and "Search". The breadcrumb trail is "Applications > Verification Report >". The page title is "SFA Verification Collection Report For School Year: 2022 - 2023".

Below the title, there is a text box containing the following information:
8801 Status: Active
Happy Trails K-12 Schools
DBA: Peaceful County Treasurer
555 406th Street
Happy Valley, MT 59999
Type of Agency: Educational Institution
Type of SNP Organization: Public

The form is divided into sections:
General Information
Type of Organization: Public

Verification Contact Information

1. Name: Salutation (Mrs.), First Name (Jane), Last Name (Doe)
2. Email Address: (doej@happytrails.k12.mt.us)
3. Phone: (406) 555-5555, Ext: (), Fax: (406) 555-5555
4. Title: Administrative Assistant

Due Date: November 30, 2022

Instructions

At the bottom of the form, there are "Save" and "Cancel" buttons, and a "VIEW | MODIFY" link.

MAPS Online Verification Form Features

The system pre-fills some of the items for you such as the number of directly certified students auto-populates a count from the [DCA system](#). Edit checks have been incorporated into the MAPS Verification Report form to prompt correction of errors.

Contact Alie Wolf at aliew@mt.gov or (406) 459-5394 with any further verification questions.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.