

OSPI CNS School Meal Programs

Family Income Survey – Instructions & Best Practices

In Washington State, funding for state education programs uses free and reduced-price eligibility information. Schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 non-base years must distribute the Family Income Survey (FIS) to collect this data annually for continued support of other education funding sources.

Direct Certification

At the beginning of the school year and at least monthly thereafter, complete the following:

1. Download the Direct Certification (DC) and Direct Certification-Medicaid (DCM) lists from the Education Data System (EDS) to match students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals through receipt of Assistance Program benefits (Basic Food or TANF), Medicaid, or in foster care.
2. Extend free or reduced-price meal eligibility through DC and DCM to other students in the household (Basic Food, TANF, Medicaid).
3. Coordinate with other LEA staff or outside agencies, such as the local Tribal Office, to certify students eligible through other source categorical eligibility for free meals:
 - a. Students receiving Migrant Education Services from the Migrant Student Coordinator
 - b. Students experiencing homelessness from the McKinney-Vento Liaison
 - c. Head Start and ECEAP students from the Program Coordinator
 - d. Tribal TANF benefits (federal only) from the Tribal Office
 - e. Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) benefits
 - f. Juvenile Detention Facility
4. Code eligible students in CEDARS using the appropriate codes from [Appendix X – Free/Reduced-Price Meal Eligibility Status or Low Income](#).
 - a. If some schools utilize meal applications, students attending a CEP or Provision 2 school on the application may be coded according to the application.
 - b. Students may need to be coded into the meal counting system depending on the district's software.

Family Income Survey

5. Send the Family Income Survey (FIS) to households who have not been identified through the DC process.
6. Process FISs according to the [USDA's Income Eligibility Guidelines](#) for the current school year by **March 31**.
 - a. Staff time for processing and distributing the FIS **cannot** be coded to the non-profit school food service account.
7. Code eligible students in CEDARS using the appropriate codes:
 - a. Code 25 – Survey with income level comparable to free or reduced-price meal eligibility.



- b. Leave blank – Household does not qualify, or the FIS was not returned.

Best Practices

- Gather all stakeholders to determine an action plan for distributing and collecting the FIS.
- Consider omitting the word **poverty** from the data collection process.
 - Reframe to focus on **community economic demographic** for continued support of other education funding sources.
- Promote the availability of meals at no cost to all students through the school's participation in CEP or Provision 2.
- Advertise the importance of the FIS for securing much needed state funding for certain educational programs for students.
- Distribute the FIS in enrollment packets mailed to households before school starts, during open houses, and family visits to the classroom.
- Utilize OSPI's Letter to Households' template or develop a local letter to inform households of the purpose of the FIS for maintaining other educational funding sources.
- Gather remaining FIS during parent teacher conferences.

Acronym Reference

- CEDARS – Comprehensive Education Data and Research System
- CEP – Community Eligibility Provision
- CNS - Child Nutrition Services
- ECEAP – Early Childhood Education Assistance Program
- LEA – Local Education Agency
- OSPI - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- USDA - United States Department of Agriculture