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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

k12.wa.us

July 1, 2023

Action Required

Due date:

Informational

BULLETIN NO. 047-23 CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents
School District Superintendents
School District Business Managers
School District Food Service Supervisors
Administrators of Select Private Schools

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Family Income Survey

CONTACT: Child Nutrition Services Program Specialists

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PURPOSE/BACKGROUND

Collection of free and reduced-price meal applications associated with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs, is the traditional method utilized to collect household income information. However, there are several situations where use of free and reduced-price meal applications is not allowed. This includes Local Education Agencies (LEAs) operating the National School Lunch Program's (NSLP) Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), or a Provision 2 school in a non-base year and schools or districts, and programs that do not operate the NSLP/SBP (i.e., virtual schools, some skill centers, etc.). Please review the

[Provision 2 Reference Sheet](#) for more information about base year and non-base year operations.

In these situations, instead of the meal application, the Family Income Survey (FIS) should be distributed to collect household income information. The data collected on the FIS can help schools receive funding for several state need-based funding mechanisms such as E-Rate and the Learning Assistance Program (LAP). Information collected by the FIS may also be used to qualify students for additional support and reduced fees. OSPI has created the *'It's More Than the Family Income Survey Toolkit'* to help districts promote the importance of families completing the Family Income Survey each year.

OSPI updated the Family Income Survey for school year 2023–24 to include more culturally inclusive language, especially around the term 'poverty.' The updated FIS also helps to accurately capture all eligibility categories, such as students experiencing homelessness, in foster care, or receiving Migrant Education Services. Additional information about the Community Eligibility Provision, and Meal Applications can be found on the Child Nutrition web pages or the OSPI Bulletins page.

FAMILY INCOME SURVEY GUIDELINES

The collection of household income through the Family Income Survey (FIS) is a state requirement. To ensure consistent collection, processing and reporting of data, schools should follow the below guidelines:

- FIS materials must be updated annually to match USDA Income Eligibility Guidelines. USDA Income Eligibility Guidelines are published annually and are effective July 1–June 30.
- The FIS should be distributed to families annually after July 1. A best practice is to include the FIS in "back to school" packets or when collecting other annual forms.
- The FIS should be made available to households throughout the year, and for students that transfer in during the school year.
- To accompany the FIS, *Letters to Households* templates that highlight the importance of continuing to collect household income information, are available to use – see [Available Materials section below](#).
- Materials must be made available in a language parents and guardians understand. Work with district officials to ensure you are providing meaningful access to the community your organization serves. Use the [Limited English Proficiency Reference Sheet](#) for more information.
- Students in households with an income comparable to free or reduced-price meal eligibility should be categorized with the corresponding FIS designation in the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), Appendix X.

- The FIS should be processed within ten working days and reported in CEDARS by March 31 each year to ensure proper data collection.
- The FIS is not a federal requirement, therefore staff time to distribute, collect, and process the FIS cannot be paid for with non-profit school food service account funds. LEAs may use non-food service staff to complete this work or fund food service staff completing tasks related to the FIS with another funding source.
- Although the Family Income Survey is a state requirement, the USDA Eligibility manual for School Meals may be utilized for determining what households should count as income.
- The FIS is not subject to verification.
- Families should be informed of the availability of breakfast and lunch at no cost, in applicable schools.

Direct Certification

LEAs must continue to perform direct certification at least monthly, regardless of use of the FIS. Direct Certification is the process LEAs use to certify categorically eligible children for free or reduced-price meals without further application. Students may be directly certified based on participation in assistance programs, including but not limited to Basic Food and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Consent to Share documentation must be obtained for directly certified students prior to sharing eligibility status. Best practices include conducting direct certification frequently at the beginning of the school year and sending a Consent to Share form with the notification of eligibility annually.

Notification of Eligibility Determination

Requirements for notifying households of eligibility are dependent on Direct Certification or the submission of a FIS.

- Households with children who are directly certified **must** be notified either verbally or in writing.
- Households who submit a FIS with income comparable to free or reduced-price meal eligibility **may** be notified either verbally or in writing.

Available Materials

Resources on the FIS and prototype letters can be found on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) [CEP & Provision 2 webpage](#):

- [2023-24 Family Income Survey](#): This survey allows LEAs to collect household income information in place of the free and reduced-price meal application. The FIS has been translated into 10 languages.
- [Letter to Households – CEP Schools](#): This letter is for LEAs operating CEP at one or more schools.
- [Letter to Households – Provision 2 Schools](#): This letter is for LEAs operating a Provision 2 non-base year for breakfast and lunch at one or more schools.
- [Notice of Eligibility for Reduced Fees – Direct Certification](#): This letter may be used to notify households of student(s) who have been directly certified and may be eligible for reduced fees.
- [Notice of Eligibility for Reduced Fees – Family Income Survey](#): This letter may be used to notify households of student(s) who may be eligible for reduced fees based off their reported income on a FIS.

Consent to Share Child Nutrition Program Eligibility Information for Other School Programs

Disclosure of eligibility information to programs not outlined in the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) requires parent or guardian consent. These programs include local programs and activities, such as fees for band, athletics, field trips, or Associated Student Body (ASB).

Parent or guardian consent must be obtained annually and prior to disclosure – households must also be able to limit consent to only those programs with which they wish to share information. If a child is directly certified, the LEA must have a system in place to obtain consent from these households before sharing their information.

Local Education Agencies that gather parent or guardian consent for local programs that offer reduced fees for Students from low-income families can use the [Consent to Share Child Nutrition Program Eligibility Information for Other School Programs form](#). This form may be included with the letter to households sent home at the beginning of the school year or with the letter notifying households they have been directly certified or found eligible for reduced fees based off their reported income.

Non-Discrimination Statement

As the FIS is used for purposes outside of the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, program materials related to the collection and distribution of the FIS should not include the USDA Nondiscrimination Statement. LEAs should include the districts' nondiscrimination statement on all program materials widely disseminated to students and families.

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INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

For questions regarding this bulletin please contact your assigned program specialist or call the OSPI TTY number at 360-664-3631.

This bulletin is also available on the [Bulletins](#) page of the OSPI website.

Tennille Jeffries-Simmons

Chief of Staff

Leanne Eko

Chief Nutrition Officer

Child Nutrition Services

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The Sponsor hereby agrees that it will comply with: i. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.); ii. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.); iii. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794); iv. Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.); v. Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as amended by the ADA Amendment Act of 2008 (42 U.S.C. 12131-12189); vi. Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." (August 11, 2000); vii. All provisions required by the implementing regulations of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) (7 CFR Part 15 et seq.); viii. Department of Justice Enforcement Guidelines (28 CFR Parts 35, 42 and 50.3); ix. Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) directives and guidelines to the effect that, no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subject to discrimination under any program or activity for which the Program applicant receives Federal financial assistance from USDA; and hereby gives assurance that it will immediately take measures necessary to effectuate this Agreement. x. The USDA non-discrimination statement that in accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).

This assurance is given in consideration of and for the purpose of obtaining any and all Federal financial assistance, grants, and loans of Federal funds, reimbursable expenditures, grant, or donation of Federal property and interest in property, the detail of Federal personnel, the sale and lease of, and the permission to use Federal property or interest in such property or the furnishing of services without consideration or at a nominal consideration, or at a consideration that is reduced for the purpose of assisting the recipient, or in recognition of the public interest to be served by such sale, lease, or furnishing of services to the recipient, or any improvements made with Federal financial assistance extended to the Program applicant by USDA. This includes any Federal agreement, arrangement, or other contract that has as one of its purposes the provision of cash assistance for the purchase of food, and cash assistance for purchase or rental of food service equipment or any other financial assistance extended in reliance on the representations and agreements made in this assurance.

By accepting this assurance, the Sponsor agrees to compile data, maintain records, and submit records and reports as required, to permit effective enforcement of nondiscrimination laws and permit authorized USDA personnel during hours of program operation to review and copy such records, books, and accounts, access such facilities and interview such personnel as needed to ascertain compliance with the nondiscrimination laws. If there are any violations of this assurance, the Department of Agriculture, FNS, shall have the right to seek judicial enforcement of this assurance. This assurance is binding on the Sponsor, its successors, transferees and assignees as long as it receives assistance or retains possession of any assistance from USDA.

OSPI provides equal access to all programs and services without discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. Questions and complaints of alleged discrimination should be directed to the Equity and Civil Rights Director at 360-725-6162/TTY: 360-664-3631; or P.O. Box 47200, Olympia, WA 98504-7200; or equity@k12.wa.us.