

Fact Sheet: Direct Certification through SNAP, TFA and Medicaid

Students may become eligible for free or reduced-price meals at school through the approval of a free or reduced-price meal application or through direct certification. This document provides important information to help people address clients' questions related to free and reduced-price school meal benefits through direct certification only.

Direct Certification

Direct Certification is a process to certify eligible students for free or reduced-price meals without having to fill out an application. There are different ways that a student may become directly certified for free or reduced-price meals. One way is through a match of students conducted by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Department of Social Services (DSS), and local educational agencies (LEAs). Each week, the CSDE's Direct Certification Web Application matches enrolled public-school students to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), and Medicaid (HUSKY A) lists of children provided by DSS. Once a child is directly certified as eligible for free or reduced-price meals, they maintain that eligibility for the entire school year even if they later stopped receiving DSS benefits.

Eligibility and Direct Certification through SNAP and TFA

Students who are receiving SNAP and TFA benefits are automatically eligible for free meals without households needing to also submit a free or reduced-price school meal application.

Direct Certification and Medicaid (HUSKY A)

The CSDE participates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Demonstration Project to Evaluate Direct Certification with Medicaid. This project allows LEAs to use Medicaid (HUSKY A) in conjunction with household income as a method of directly certifying students for free or reduced-price meals or free milk.

A Medicaid (HUSKY A) student is eligible for free or reduced-price meals only if the *student's name appears on the direct certification list*. Some (but not all) students that receive Medicaid (HUSKY A) are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Since the [Income Eligibility Guidelines](#) used in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) are different from those used in the Medicaid (HUSKY A) program, a student receiving Medicaid (HUSKY A) is not automatically guaranteed to be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. This requirement is outlined in the USDA Medicaid Demonstration Project. Parents with questions regarding their child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals via Medicaid (HUSKY A) should contact ACCESS HEALTH CT at 1-855-805-4325.

Direct Certification and HUSKY B – The Children's Health Insurance Program

HUSKY B refers to the state's children's health insurance program targeted towards uninsured children in families with higher incomes. HUSKY B cannot be used to directly certify students for free or reduced-priced meals or free milk.

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The chart below summarizes the different ways a student may be eligible for free or reduced-price-meals based on direct certification and eligibility for SNAP, TFA or Medicaid.

A Student's Free or Reduced-price Eligibility and Direct Certification through SNAP, TFA, or Medicaid			
Benefit	DC free eligible	DC reduced-price eligible	Ineligible
SNAP *	X		
TFA (TANF)	X		
HUSKY A (Medicaid) with annual income \leq 130% federal poverty level (FPL)	X		
HUSKY A (Medicaid) with annual income between 130% FPL – 185% FPL		X	
HUSKY A (Medicaid) with annual income \geq 185% FPL			X
HUSKY B (SCHIP)			X
* A child who is a member of a household that is receiving “zero benefits” from SNAP is not categorically eligible for free meals based on SNAP participation.			

Direct Certification and Extended Eligibility

A directly certified student's eligibility extends to other students living in the same household when the circumstances below apply.

- If one child or adult in the household receives SNAP or TFA benefits, categorical eligibility for free meal benefits through the Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs) is extended to all students in that household. Since the direct certification system does not directly certify adults or nonstudents, eligibility through an adult or nonstudent living in the household would need to be demonstrated by the household. This requires providing proof of SNAP or TFA benefits to the LEA at the time the household submits a free or reduced-price meal application.
- If a student is directly certified as Medicaid (HUSKY A) and their name appears on the direct certification list, categorical eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits (as applicable) through the CNPs is extended to all students in that household.

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Direct Certification for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/DirectCert/Fact_Sheet_Direct_Certification_SNAP_TFA_Medicaid.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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