COLORADO
Department of Education

TO: School Business Officials, Pupil Count Coordinators, and Food Service Directors

FROM: Jennifer Okes, District Operations Special Advisor

DATE: April 29, 2026

SUBJECT: Family Economic Data Survey—2026-2027 School Year

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued a policy prohibiting the use of the *Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals* for any other programs in schools that do not participate in the federal child nutrition programs. Because there are other programs that link funding to free or reduced-price meal eligibility, including additional state at-risk funding and potentially local waivers of school fees, the Colorado Department of Education has developed a *Family Economic Data Survey* form as an alternative data collection instrument for non-participating schools.

The *Family Economic Data Survey* form is attached to this letter, along with family-friendly instructions which explain how to complete the form and outline the purpose of the form.

State statute (Section 22-54-112(4), C.R.S.) requires every school to include the federal *Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals,* the state *Family Economic Data Survey* form, or a *Combination* form in its registration materials. The materials shall include an explanation that these documents will be used to determine whether the school is eligible for at-risk funding on behalf of the pupil and, by filling out the form, the parent is ensuring the district or school will receive the at-risk funding to which it is entitled, based on the population of at- risk pupils served by the district.

The district's food service fund cannot be used for any processing or maintenance of documentation not associated with eligibility for the child nutrition programs, as it is an unallowable cost. This includes collection, processing, and maintenance of the *Family Economic Data Survey* forms. Other district resources must be used. If the district wishes to have food service personnel process the surveys, the food service fund must be reimbursed for the cost of this processing.

Districts are responsible for ensuring that the data collection complies with all applicable state and federal confidentiality rules. Questions regarding the documentation to evidence at-risk eligibility for School Finance purposes and CDE audits should be directed to the School Auditing Office at armeasure@cde.state.co.us. Questions regarding the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 should be directed to the School Nutrition Office at Free&ReducedPriceSchoolMeals@cde.state.co.us

Enclosures: District Determining Official Processing Instructions

2026-2027 FAMILY ECONOMIC DATA SURVEY
DETERMINING OFFICIAL PROCESSING INSTRUCTIONS

The procedures for processing the *Family Economic Data Survey* are similar to those for *Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals*, and utilize the same eligibility criteria. It is important to note that while similar, this survey is not a substitute for an official meal benefit application, and families should not be led to believe that completion of the form will result in meal benefits for their child. If this form is used to document eligibility for state or federal program funding, it will be subject to audit by CDE and other program officials. Failure to process and document eligibility correctly may result in an audit exception and a subsequent recovery of funds.

The district should consider the following when processing applications:

- Student information must be accurate and can be linked to a child enrolled at a particular school.
- The application form must be completed correctly if a student is to be considered eligible for free meals/at-risk funding.
- The signature of the eligibility-determining official must be on all applications, including applications that have been denied.
- All *SNAP* case numbers in Colorado begin with '1B' and are followed by 5 alphanumeric characters.
- All Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (*FDPIR)* case numbers are 9 numbers long and contain no letters.
- The following tables outlines the income threshold consistent with free and reduced-price lunch eligibility for the 2026-2027 school year:

Free Lunch Eligibility

Household Size	Yearly	Monthly	2x/Month	Every Other Week	Weekly
1	$ 20,748	$ 1,729	$ 865	$ 798	$ 399
2	$28,132	$2,345	$1,173	$1,082	$541
3	$35,516	$2,960	$1,480	$1,366	$683
4	$42,900	$3,575	$1,788	$1,650	$825
5	$50,284	$4,191	$2,096	$1,934	$967
6	$57,668	$4,806	$2,403	$2,218	$1,109
7	$65,052	$5,421	$2,711	$2,502	$1,251
8	$72,436	$6,037	$3,019	$2,786	$1,393
For each additional family member add	$7,384	$616	$308	$284	$142
Error-Prone Threshold	$1,200	$100	$50	$44	$24

Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility

Household Size	Yearly	Monthly	2x/Month	Every Other Week	Weekly
1	$ 29,526	$ 2,461	$ 1,231	$ 1,136	$ 568
2	$ 40,034	$ 3,337	$ 1,669	$ 1,540	$ 770
3	$ 50,542	$ 4,212	$ 2,106	$ 1,944	$ 972
4	$ 61,050	$ 5,088	$ 2,544	$ 2,349	$ 1,175
5	$ 71,558	$ 5,964	$ 2,982	$ 2,753	$ 1,377
6	$ 82,066	$ 6,839	$ 3,420	$ 3,157	$ 1,579
7	$ 92,574	$ 7,715	$ 3,858	$ 3,561	$ 1,781
8	$103,082	$ 8,591	$ 4,296	$ 3,965	$ 1,983
For each additional family member add	$ 10,508	$ 876	$ 438	$ 405	$ 203
Error-Prone Threshold	$1,200	$100	$50	$44	$24

The **conversion factors** for computing family income are:

- If there is only one source of income, or if all sources received are in the same frequency (example, monthly income), no conversion is required.
- If there are multiple income sources with more than one frequency, the determining official must annualize all income by multiplying:
  - Weekly income by 52;
  - Bi-weekly income (received every two weeks) by 26;
  - Semi-monthly income (received twice a month) by 24; and
  - Monthly income by 12.

- The district's food service fund cannot be used for any processing or maintenance of documentation not associated with eligibility for the child nutrition programs, as it is an unallowable cost. Other district resources must be used. If the district wishes to have food service personnel process the surveys, the food service fund must be reimbursed for the cost of this processing.

Refer also to the instructions for the parents for further guidance.