How To Verify & Correct Your School’s Direct Certification List

Why is direct certification so important for your students and school?
The new Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is available as an option to provide universal meals at no charge to students in schools where 40% or more of enrolled students are directly certified for free school meals. Under CEP, the higher the percentage of directly certified students, the higher the reimbursement provided by USDA. This means it is more important than ever that every school’s direct certification list is accurate and complete.

Even if your school is not eligible for CEP, ensuring that every qualifying student is on your school’s direct certification list helps your school to become eligible for universal summer and afterschool meals, reduce the number of unpaid meal program accounts, and ensure that every hungry student is able to eat nutritious school meals.

*Make your own direct certification list at the beginning of each school year, and update it each month. Add the students whose names appear on the monthly lists you receive from the State, but do not stop there!

Each month, an updated official direct certification list is sent to your SU or district. New students will appear on this list throughout the year, as the status of their families change. This is why it is crucial that you work with the person at your SU, district, or school who has access to this list to make sure it is updated and corrected every month. If you are having difficulty accessing this official state direct certification list, call the Agency of Education’s IT Help Desk at (802) 479-1044.

Transfer students from these official lists to your master direct certification list each month. Then conduct your own search by address to locate any siblings or other enrolled children living in the same households as children appearing on the official list. Also add homeless and migrant children, and all children in Head Start, to your master list. A sample master direct certification list is included with this document.

Who belongs on your master direct certification list? Children enrolled in your school:

- Who are on the official state direct certification list
- Who are living in a household that includes a child who is on the official state direct certification list who is enrolled in your school
- Who have been formally placed in foster care by a State agency or court
- Who have been certified as homeless/runaway by a Homeless Liaison
- Who are enrolled in a Head Start pre-k program
- Who have been certified as part of a migrant household
- USDA requires that you indicate all children directly certified through 3SquaresVT (SNAP or food stamps) on your master direct certification list. This means all children enrolled at your school who are in a household in which any child has been directly certified because any person in that household receives 3SquaresVT benefits.
How do you know which students to add to your direct certification list?

1. Review the official direct certification list provided to your SU/District by the Department for Children and Families (DCF) each month.

2. Check addresses to identify all students living in the same household as any student on the official DCF direct certification list—whether they are siblings or not. Add all students living at these addresses who are enrolled in your school to your list. (You can sort students by address if you maintain your enrollment data in a program like Excel or Power School.)

3. Check with your school’s Homeless Liaison each month to make sure you have added all enrolled students certified as homeless to your list. If you don’t know who your school’s Homeless Liaison is, call Beth Meyer at the Agency of Education, (802) 479-3112.

4. If your school includes a Head Start pre-k program, add all of the children enrolled to your list.

5. Whenever you receive a school meals application where a parent or guardian has supplied a 3SquaresVT or Reach Up case number, check to make sure that those students appear on the official State direct certification list. If they do not appear, you may check with AOE to see if these students should also be on the Direct Certification List. Fax or call using the form attached to this document.

6. Whenever you receive a school meals application where a parent or guardian has indicated that one or more students is a foster child, check to make sure that those students appear on the official State direct certification list. If they do not appear, use the form included with this document to confirm with AOE by fax or phone that those students are in foster care. Once you receive confirmation, add all students in that household who are enrolled in your school to your list.

*Any students you add to your direct certification list remain on the list for the entire school year, even if they disappear from a later version of the official State list.

Save all documentation—including the monthly official lists you receive from the State!

***Eligibility for CEP is based on the number of students currently enrolled in your school who are eligible to be directly certified for free school meals as of April 1st, so it is important to update your list monthly, and to determine the date when they became eligible for direct certification if you are adding students to your list after April 1st.

The following page contains two forms:

1. A sample master direct certification list

2. A form you may fax to DCF to verify the direct certification status of specific students
   (*If you do not receive a timely response from DCF, please call Cheryl Rogers at the Agency of Education Child Nutrition Programs, 802-479-1360 for assistance)
INSTRUCTIONS: You must keep a List of Directly Certified students, from all certification sources such as the AOE School Web Census, a roster signed by a Head Start, a letter from the AOE Migrant Education Program, a letter/list from the school district Homeless/Runaway Youth Coordinator, etc. for their history [date of change] in case of a change in eligibility and/or circumstances. Include the approval date. For Direct Certification from the Student Census, be sure to update and include date information as soon as additions are made. The Direct Certification List from the Student Census must be checked monthly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Approval Date</th>
<th>Direct Certification Source / Basis</th>
<th>SNAP? Indicate with Y</th>
<th>If Status Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C: Census M: Migrant H: Homeless HS: Head Start F: State-Placed Foster E: Extended</td>
<td></td>
<td>Date of change Status Changed to Reason [moved, etc]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

3
3SquaresVT/Reach-Up/Foster Child Verification For School Meals Program

For school to complete:

School Name __________________________________________ Date ______________

School Address ________________________________________________________________

School representative _________________________________________________________

Phone ___________________ Email address ________________________________

Fax Number: __________________________

Please verify that the children identified below are receiving 3SquaresVT or Reach Up benefits or are in DCF custody. If there are additional children, please list them on the back of the form.

*****

1. Parent’s name ____________________________ Case Number ______________

2. Address ________________________________________________

3. City ______________________________ State ___________ Zip code __________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Name</th>
<th>Child’s Date of Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Send this form to: Department for Children and Families,
ESD Food and Nutrition Programs, School Meals Verification,
280 State Drive, Waterbury, Vt. 05671-1201
Attn.: Ben Gregory
Please enclose a self-addressed return envelope.

Or Fax to: 802-241-0460

For DCF to complete:

____ The children/household identified above ARE receiving 3SquaresVT or Reach Up benefits.

____ The child/children identified above are Foster Children.

____ The children/household identified above are NOT receiving 3SquaresVT or Reach Up benefits.

____ The child/children are not foster children.

DCF staff member verifying information _________________________________

Date of verification ____________ Phone: __________ Email ________________

Benefit Verification Form