

Verification Guidance for School Meals

Note: Further information regarding the verification of eligibility for free and reduced price meals can be found in the USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals, located in SNEARS.

Verification is the process used by SFAs to confirm selected students' eligibility for free and reduced-priced meals in the National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Verification is only required when eligibility is determined through the application process, not through direct certification.

Not all applications are verified. USDA has established that the standard sample size is three percent (3%) of the total approved free and reduced price **paper applications** on file as of October 1st, selected from error prone applications.

Step 1- Number of Applications to Verify

Between October 1st - 30th click on the Verification Collection Report - FNS 742 link in SNEARS (**S**chool **N**utrition **E**lectronic **A**pplication **R**eimbursement **S**ystem) and enter requested information in Sections 4 A and 5-4 on the Verification Collection Report.

- ❖ The number of applications on file as of October 1st can be obtained from the district's Master Eligibility List (MEL) (Form #128) or other resources
- ❖ The number of error prone applications on file as of October 1st can be obtained from the district's Master Eligibility List (MEL) (Form #128) or other resources
- ❖ The certifier, alternate certifier, submitter, alternate submitter, and other user have access to complete direct certification
- ❖ The number to verify will automatically be calculated when the data is entered

Step 2 - Selection of Applications to Verify

The sample size must be selected from error prone applications.

- ❖ Error prone applications would be those defined as:
 - Weekly: \$0-\$25 below the free and reduced price income eligibility limit.
 - Every two weeks or twice a month: \$0-\$50 below the free and reduced price income eligibility limit.
 - Monthly: \$0-\$100 below the free and reduced price income eligibility limit.
 - Annually: \$0-\$1200 below the free and reduced price income eligibility limit.
 - When an insufficient number of error prone applications are available, randomly select from the remaining applications to meet the required sample size.
 - When more error prone applications are available, select randomly from the error prone pool.

Step 3 – Confirmation of Applications

Prior to notifying the household of verification, the applications selected must be reviewed by the confirming official. (This individual cannot be the determining official.) The confirming official must validate the determination, correctly identify that the application is error prone and sign and date in the confirming official section on the back of the application.

Step 4 - Verifying the Applications

- ❖ The selected household(s) must be sent a “We Must Check Your Application” (Form #236) to inform them of their selection.
- ❖ The “Verification Tracker” (Form #242) must be completed for each application verified. Attach all documentation to the verified application and file in a verification folder.
- ❖ If the verification information is incomplete, the household must be contacted and SFAs can use “Letter to Notify Household of Incomplete Verification” (Form #237), email, or phone the household. All contacts to the household must be noted on the verification tracker (Form #242).
- ❖ When the household fails to respond, a second attempt to obtain verification documents must be made. The second attempt to obtain information may be made through mail “Second Notice We Must Check Your Application” (Form #21), email, text, or phone. All second attempts to the household must be noted on the verification tracker (Form #242).
- ❖ Households that have a change in eligibility status must receive “We Have Checked Your Application” (Form #244).
- ❖ Meal status changes must be reflected on the MEL, the application, and the meal counting system. Appropriate personnel must be informed of any changes. The “Notification of Status Change” (Form #318) can be used to notify appropriate personnel.
- ❖ The entire verification process must be completed by November 15th.

Step 5 – Completion of the Verification Collection Report

- ❖ Before November 30th click on the “Verification Collection Report- FNS 742” link in SNEARS and enter requested information in the sections required.
 - The results of verification will be recorded in Section 5-8 on the Verification Collection Report.
- ❖ All verification results must be recorded on the “Verification Tracker” (Form #242) and transferred into the appropriate columns on the “Verification Collection Report”.
- ❖ The “Verification Collection Report FNS 742” must be completed, maintained on file, and electronically submitted in SNEARS between October 31st and November 30th.

The results:

- ❖ No change in benefit level: The household's current documentation supports the level of benefits for which the household has been approved.
- ❖ Reduction in Benefits: The household's current documentation identifies income too high for the level of benefits for which the child had been originally approved. Example: free changed to reduced price, free changed to paid or reduced price changed to paid.
- ❖ Increase in benefit level: The household's current documentation qualifies the household for free meals rather than reduced price meals. Example: reduced price changed to free.
- ❖ Termination of benefits: Households who do not respond to verification efforts or whose current documentation does not support eligibility will be denied benefits. Example: free changed to paid or reduced price changed to paid.
- ❖ Detailed instructions for completing the Verification Collection Report FNS 742 are linked to the report in SNEARS. If further guidance is needed on completing this form a webinar is posted in the Training Tab in SNEARS.