



## Detailed Procedures for Administering the NJDOE Household Information Survey

### General Administrative Guidance:

The administration of a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) school (district or charter school) is responsible for collecting household information included on the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) 2018-19 Household Information Survey. The method of distribution and collection (paper or electronic) is at the discretion of the school administration. However, CEP schools that use online applications to collect the information must ensure the application collects all the information included on the NJDOE survey, and that it may be retained for seven years. The NJDOE Household survey is available on the [NJDOE CEP website: www.state.nj.us/education/finance/cep](http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/cep). Page 1 of the survey must be completed using instructions on page 2 of the form.

School administrators may designate a deadline for parents/guardians to return completed surveys. Surveys must be obtained by the October 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for reporting students as low-income in the NJ Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching (NJ NJSMART) database. Additional documentation of household income, required by the verification process for a sample of low-income students, must be obtained in order to report students as low-income on the Application for State School Aid (ASSA) and the Charter Enrollment System (CHE).

The administration must identify at least one determining official and one confirming official. Designated officials may be selected from any appropriate school employee or contractor. While school food service staff may process the forms, the cost of processing *may not* be paid from the non-profit school food service account and the forms may not be associated with school meals.

### Guidance for Determining Official(s):

The determining official(s) is responsible for ensuring all students reported as “low-income” on State enrollment collections (ASSA, CHE, NJSMART) have sufficient documentation to indicate household income eligibility.

For each student reported as low-income (“free” or “reduced”), the district must have one of the following:

1. A completed, signed, current year NJDOE Household Information Survey (or alternative online application); or
2. A direct certification match from the School Nutrition Electronic Application Reimbursement System (SNEARS) for the student or for another student in the same household; or
3. Evidence that the student is homeless, a migrant, or in foster care or Head Start; or
4. An approved current year “Household Application for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk” for another student who lives in the same household.

- Carrying over National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or CEP forms from the prior year is not permitted for CEP schools' state reporting purposes.

## Process for the determining official

### 1. Review the survey for errors

For any student identified on the School Register as low-income based on information provided in the NJDOE Household Information Survey, the determining official must review the survey, checking for the following common errors (at a minimum):

#### Part A:

- For each household member, is the date of birth, name of school, grade level, and other student information (if applicable) entered?
- For each student identified as migrant, homeless, foster, or in Head Start, does the district maintain evidence on file to support the designation?

**Part B:** If the FDPIR, TANF, or SNAP box is marked, is a name and case number provided?

**Part C:** Is only one income range box marked; or, for households greater than eight, is the income written below boxes 1 through 17?

**Part D:** Is the certification section complete with signature and date?

### 2. Determine income status (Section "For School Use Only"):

- Determine the income status for each application – F, R, or N – using the [Quick Reference Guide](#) on the NJDOE website.
- Count the number of household members listed in Part A of the survey, and find the income range from Part C of the survey that corresponds with the household size and income range on the "Quick Reference Guide."
- Enter the income status from the student's survey as F, R, or N as follows:

**F** ("Free") for *any* of the following:

- Part A identifies the student as migrant, homeless, foster, or in Head Start;
- Part B has been completed including a case number; *or*
- Part C income range and Part A household size correspond to the Quick Reference Guide, column "F" for income <130% poverty.

**R** ("Reduced") where:

- Part C income range and Part A household size correspond to the Quick Reference Guide, column "R" for 130-185% poverty.

**N** (Not low-income) for *any* of the following:

- Part B indicates FDPIR, TANF or SNAP, but the name and/or case number is missing;
- Part C income and Part A household size correspond with the Quick Reference Guide, column "N" for income >185% poverty; *or*

- The survey does not otherwise indicate the student is “F” or “R” using the criteria above.
- iv. If the survey has been classified as not low-income, provide an explanation on the line, “Reason for ineligibility.” Recommended examples include:
  - “Over income” if the income for household size is above 185% poverty.
  - “Failure to sign form” if no signature is provided.
  - “Case number inaccuracy” if a case number is missing or contains an incorrect combination of digits/numbers/letters.
  - “Multiple incomes provided - unable to determine” if multiple boxes are checked in Part C.

**3. Sign and date the form** (after reviewing the survey)

**4. Check NJDOE reporting.** The determining official must ensure the total number of low-income students in a CEP school that are reported on the ASSA, CHE, NJ SMART reports agrees with the *sum* of the following:

1. The total number of on-roll students who are either directly certified through the SNEARS matching system or live in a household with a student who is directly certified, *plus*
2. The number of students (who are not directly certified) who have on file either a completed current year NJDOE Household Information Survey or documentation that another student in the household (from a non-CEP school) has a current year “Household Application for Free or Reduced Priced Meals or Free Milk;” *plus*
3. The number of students who are not directly certified, but who are identified as homeless, migrant, in foster care, or in Head Start.

*Note:* Prior year carryover Applications for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk are *not* acceptable documentation for identifying CEP school students as low-income for State reporting.

## Guidance for Confirming Official(s):

The confirming official is responsible for ensuring that each student in a CEP School who is identified as low-income in the New Jersey School Register, as required by *N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.1*, or any state data collection (e.g., ASSA, CHE, NJSMART) is supported by appropriate documentation.

### Process for the confirming official

1. Obtain from the determining official all completed current year NJDOE Household Information Surveys.
2. Take appropriate steps to confirm the accuracy of forms that contain alterations. For example (ex.) document outreach to the parent or guardian who signed the form).
3. Separate the NJDOE Household Information Survey forms into *two* categories:
  1. F or R (household income at or below 185% times the federal poverty level (FPL), or categorically eligible); and
  2. N (not low-income).

4. Determine the number of low-income (F or R) students the district is required to verify using the [Sample Size Calculator](#).
  - Follow the directions in the calculator. Enter the total low-income enrollment for each school in the template, and it will show the required number of students for your sample (by school). Note: Low-income totals should include students who qualify through income surveys as well as those who are direct certified through SNEARS or are categorically eligible.
  - Sample size may be determined using either enrollments for individual CEP schools, or the district total enrollment (including CEP and non-CEP schools). The lower sample size may be used. The school method will yield a larger sample size, and is described in more detail in Appendices B and C of this document.
5. The confirming official must then identify which individual students will be included in a random sample for verification.
  - As an alternative to a random sample, you may use the school register(s) for each CEP school as the student population, and determine a selection interval (ex. every fifth low-income student) by dividing the number of low-income students reported in the school register by the required sample size.
  - Ex. If a school register reports 1,320 low-income students, the sample size is 264. Since  $1,320/264 = 5$ , the official will select every fifth student reported as low-income in the school register(s) until 264 individual students reported as low-income have been identified for confirmation.
6. In order to confirm the low-income status for each student in the sample, the official must make sure the district has documentation in the form of *one* of the following:
  - A completed current year NJDOE Household Information Survey, marked F or R by the determining official, along with supporting documentation for the income;
  - A SNEARS-generated Direct Certification match for the student or for another student in the household;
  - Evidence the student is migrant, homeless, in foster care or Head Start; or
  - Evidence of an approved current year “Household Application for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk” for another child in the household (in a non-CEP school).
7. When the NJDOE Household Information Survey is the source document for a student reported as low-income, the official must verify the accuracy of the survey by contacting the household to request documentation. A sample letter is available on the NJDOE CEP page in English and Spanish. ([Sample Letter: English](#), [Sample Letter: Spanish](#)).
  - The letter must state that the household was selected for verification, and include the following information:
    1. The types of acceptable documentation that may be provided to confirm current income (pay stubs, award letters from assistance agencies for benefits such as social security or supplemental security income, and support payment decrees from courts);
    2. That an acceptable alternative to income data is proof that a child or any household member is receiving benefits under the SNAP/TANF/FDPIR or is “Other Source Categorically Eligible” (migrant, homeless, etc.);
    3. The date by which documentation must be received by the school; and
    4. The name of a school official who can provide assistance with the form.

8. How to determine when verification is considered complete. The following demonstrates how a school/LEA determines that verification is complete and no follow-up is required:
- The household submits either adequate written evidence or collateral contact corroboration of income or categorical eligibility; *or*
  - The household submits adequate written evidence or collateral contact corroboration of income indicating the child(ren) should be classified in the proper grouping according to the documents presented; *or*
  - The Household Information Survey provides case numbers and it is determined that no household member is receiving benefits from an Assistance Program, *and* the student is re-categorized accordingly.
9. When a follow-up for obtaining support documentation is necessary:
- The school/LEA must make *at least one* follow-up attempt when the household:
    1. Does not respond to the request for verification;
    2. Submits insufficient or obsolete written evidence;
    3. Does not designate collateral contacts; or
    4. Collateral contacts are unable or unwilling to provide evidence.
  - The follow-up contact may be in writing (including through the parent/guardian email) or by telephone, and must be documented.
  - LEAs must ensure LEP households are provided adequate language assistance and understand the need to respond to the verification request.
  - The LEA must encourage the household to report the income data. Failure to provide adequate written evidence or to designate an adequate collateral contact may cause the school to report inaccurate data to the state and may result in changes to the school district's state aid allocation.
  - Verification is considered complete when, after at least one follow-up attempt, *one* of the following occurs:
    - The household responds and provides all needed evidence (student's status is adequately verified); or
    - The school/LEA is unable to continue its verification activities because the household fails to provide adequate written evidence or knowledgeable collateral contacts, *and* the student is re-categorized.
      - Students cannot be reported to the State as low-income when verification of income is incomplete and/or undocumented.

**Please Note:** Any and all records associated with the NJDOE Household Information Survey must be maintained for audit purposes for a period of *seven years*.

## Appendix A

### Acceptable Supporting Documentation for NJDOE Household Information Survey

#### Requirements for the verification of written evidence:

1. Must show the period of eligibility.
2. Acceptable sources include: SNAP, TANF, FDPIR; pay stubs from employers, award letters from government agencies.
3. Written evidence must include the name of the household member, income amount and frequency, and the date the income was received.
4. For Other Source Eligibility, acceptable evidence is an official letter, notice, or list from the appropriate State agency.
5. Note: EBT cards cannot be used to confirm eligibility.

#### Collateral contact requirements:

1. A collateral contact is a person outside the household who is familiar with the circumstances and who can confirm eligibility (e.g. employers, social service agencies, religious organizations). These contacts should only be requested when the household cannot provide written evidence.
2. The official must give the household the opportunity to designate the contact. The official may select a collateral contact if the household fails to designate an acceptable one, but the collateral contact may be contacted only with the consent of the household member.
3. If the collateral contact is unwilling or unable to provide the requested information, the school must contact the household to complete the verification process.
4. Local SNAP lists available to the district may be used to verify Assistance Program case numbers reported on the Surveys.
5. All contact (oral or written) must be documented, dated, and initialed.

#### Agency Records

1. A household's eligibility may be confirmed through the use of information maintained by other government agencies to which the state agency, LEA, or school has legal access.
2. Documentation of income or receipt of assistance may be provided for any point in time between the month prior to application and the time the household is required to provide income documentation.

## Appendix B

### Sample Size Calculation & Selection: School-Based and District Wide Methods

All CEP districts and charter schools must verify the accuracy of a representative sample of the low-income enrollments prior to reporting to the State. This document provides directions and examples to guide CEP districts and charter schools in determining their required low-income verification sample size, and selection of that sample. The process and results will be subject to audit. *Note:* These instructions explain the calculations. As an alternative to following these calculations, districts and charter schools may choose to simply use the [sample size calculator](#).

#### Requirements for CEP Charter Schools:

CEP charter schools will calculate their verification sample size based upon the CEP school's low-income enrollment entered into the Charter School Enrollment System (CHE) and the sample size table shown in Appendix C. For example, a CEP charter school reports 1,320 low-income students in the CHE. Use of the sample size calculator on the NJDOE website determines the charter school must select 264 students for verification out of the 1,320 that have been classified as low-income. The charter school's confirming official must select 264 low-income students at random. Alternatively, the official may determine the sample using applying the method of every "nth" student (e.g., every fifth low-income student), by dividing the number of students reported as low-income by the required sample size. In this instance, every fifth student ( $1,320/264 = 5$ ) is selected until 264 students have been identified for verification.

#### Requirements for CEP Districts:

Calculate the required low-income verification sample size on an individual school basis *or* on a district wide basis. Districts are encouraged to determine the sample size requirement on a district wide basis, as the district wide sample will yield the smaller sample size. If you would prefer a more robust sample, you should use the individual school basis described in the next section. The district can use the sample size calculator on the CEP website to determine the sample size that corresponds with the number of low-income students on-roll at each of the district's CEP schools. Simply enter the low-income enrollment totals for each school into the template, and the calculator will show the number of students you need to sample from each school. Please note that non-CEP schools and students in non-CEP schools should be excluded from the CEP sample size calculations in both the district and school based methods.

## Individual School Basis of Sample Size Selection

Districts using this method must determine the sample size for each CEP school individually, using the CEP sample size selection table in Appendix C. As an example, a CEP school has 1,320 low-income students on-roll as detailed on the ASSA workpapers and reported in the ASSA. The sample size table shows the corresponding range for 1,320 low-income students is 1,251-1,500, which requires the CEP school to select 264 students out of the 1,320 low-income students for verification. The school's confirming official must select a random sample, or use a selection interval (e.g. every fifth student) by dividing the number of students reported as low-income by the required sample size. In this instance every fifth student ( $1,320/264 = 5$ ) is selected for verification until 264 students have been identified for verification. For detailed verification instructions, please refer to the Confirming Official's Guidance section of this document. If there are additional CEP schools in the district, the district must continue to determine the sample size for verification for *each* of the district's CEP schools using the same method. This process must continue until applied to each individual CEP school.

The Sample Size Calculator on our website could be used for the school based method by entering only *one* school's enrollment at a time. Note: If you list the low-income enrollments for all schools, the sample size calculator will show you the smaller sample needed for the district wide method.

## District Wide Basis of Sample Size Selection

Districts using the district wide method are encouraged to use the sample size calculator to simplify the process. As an alternative, districts may calculate sample sizes using the sample size table in Appendix C. For example, the table shows that a district with a total of 18,000 low-income students reported as on-roll in all of the district's 15 CEP schools will require a sample size of 322 – the corresponding range for 18,000 low-income students is 17,001 – 48,000 on the sample size selection chart. This result means the CEP school district is required to select 322 students out of the 18,000 low-income students for verification. To provide adequate coverage of the low-income concentrations, the sample must include pupils from each CEP school. Accordingly, the district wide sample size must then be allocated among the district's CEP schools according to the proportion of students reported as low-income in each CEP school relative to the total number of CEP students reported as low-income as shown below. The 322 low-income students must be allocated to each of the district's 15 CEP schools based upon the relative percentage of CEP students reported on the low-income workpapers and ASSA at each CEP school. The chart in Table I, below, shows this calculation – for this district, School 1 has 2.78% of the total low-income population ( $500 \div 18,000$ ). This is then multiplied by the total number of students needed ( $2.78\% \times 322$ ), which shows 9 students from School 1 must be verified.

Table 1: District Wide Basis of Sample Size Collection

<b>Participating CEP schools</b>	<b>Count of low-income students</b>	<b>Percentage of total (school count ÷ 18,000)</b>	<b># Students to verify per school (Percentage x 322)</b>
School 1	500	2.7%	9
School 2	600	3.33%	11
School 3	700	3.89%	13
School 4	800	4.44%	14
School 5	900	5.00%	16
School 6	1000	5.56%	18
School 7	1100	6.11%	20
School 8	1200	6.67%	21
School 9	1300	7.22%	23
School 10	1400	7.78%	25
School 11	1500	8.33%	27
School 12	1600	8.89%	29
School 13	1700	9.44%	30
School 14	1800	10.00%	32
School 15	1900	10.56%	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>322</b>

The district may also want to compare the sample size required for each school using the school vs. district methods for sample size selection.

When the district wide sample selection is utilized by the district, each school’s Confirming Official must determine a random sample totaling the required number. Alternatively, the official may determine a selection interval (e.g., every fifth student) by dividing the number of students reported as low-income in the school by the required sample size for the school as determined in the sample table below. For detailed verification instructions, please refer to the Confirming Official’s Guidance section of this document.

## Appendix C

### Determining Sample Size

The following table should be used by participating CEP schools/districts for the determination of the sample size needed for the verification of the NJ Household Information Surveys.

<b>Total Reported</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>
<b>Up to 50</b>	86%
<b>51 – 100</b>	76%
<b>101 – 150</b>	68%
<b>151 – 200</b>	62%
<b>201 – 250</b>	57%
<b>251 – 300</b>	52%
<b>301 – 400</b>	48%
<b>401-650</b>	197
<b>651-950</b>	232
<b>951-1250</b>	254
<b>1251-1500</b>	264
<b>1501-1750</b>	272
<b>1751-1950</b>	279
<b>1951-2400</b>	284
<b>2401-2900</b>	291
<b>2901-3400</b>	295
<b>3401-3900</b>	299
<b>3901-4900</b>	303
<b>4901-9500</b>	312
<b>9501-17000</b>	318
<b>17001-48000</b>	322
<b>48001-500000</b>	325

This table is based on a commonly used table which will provide a confidence level of 99 percent with a precision of  $\pm 2$  percent. The table has been condensed for this purpose and does not reflect the numerous sample sizes required for populations up to 500,000. The development of population ranges and averaging of sample sizes for such ranges will have a marginal but acceptable impact on the confidence level and precision. Sample sizes for populations up to 400 are expressed as a percentage (%) of the actual population. Sample sizes over 400 are expressed as a number for a population range.

The table was taken from the School District/Charter School Audit Program. The NJDOE's website provides the entire text of the [Audit Program](#).