Important Reminders for Completing Direct Certification

Direct certification (DC) is the process of determining children eligible for free or reduced-price meals or free milk based on documentation obtained directly from appropriate state or local agencies or other authorized individuals. This document provides important reminders regarding the DC process for school nutrition programs and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

For technical questions about accessing Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Web Application website or data collection efforts, please contact the direct certification Help Desk at 860-713-6681. For questions about processing free and reduced-price applications and DC regulations, refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) *Eligibility Manual for School Meals* or contact the district's CSDE school nutrition team member.

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Direct Certification Contact Person

Only one person per local educational agency (LEA) may be the DC contact with access to the DC Web Application Sign In. For information regarding the DC process, refer to Module 3: Direct Certification of the CSDE's Training program, *Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program*.

To determine the LEA's DC contact, refer to the CSDE's *Direct Certification Contact List for School Nutrition Programs*.

If the DC contact changes, notify Teri Dandeneau at teri.dandeneau@ct.gov with the name, email address, and phone number of the new contact. Also **notify the food service director** so that the online agreement for Child Nutrition Programs can be updated with the new contact information. The online agreement requires the name and contact information of the LEA's DC contact. When the CSDE has received and processed the new contact request, the new contact will receive a confirmation email with instructions on how to set up a user ID and password.

Interschool Agreement

If the LEA has an interschool agreement with a **public** school and is claiming those meals or assisting with the processing of the school's free and reduced-price meal or milk applications, the LEA may request (with the recipient school's approval) a login ID and password from the CSDE to access the recipient school's DC database.

If the district has an interschool agreement with a **private** school and is claiming those meals or assisting with the processing of the school's free and reduced-price meal or milk applications, the district must work with the private school to gain access to their DC information. Private schools have a different process for obtaining DC data. For more information, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Direct Certification Upload Process for Private Schools*.

Accessing DC List

Accessing the DC system is **not** optional. All LEAs that collect and approve free and reduced-price meal or milk applications must access the DC website **at least once weekly**. The information is updated on Monday unless it is a holiday. The database should be accessed on Wednesdays to allow the information to be completely updated. For questions regarding how to access the information, please contact the Help Desk at 860-713-6681.

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Case Management

Students that were not matched at the CSDE/Department of Social Services level are placed in Case Management on the DC website. LEAs must access Case Management **weekly** to determine if any students in the LEA are directly certified.

Note: If a student is matched, print a copy of the page **prior** to pressing the "Save Match" button. This provides evidence that the student was matched through this process and will be a reference point if the selection was made in error and needs to be reversed. If you made an error in matching a student, you **must contact the Help Desk** at 860-713-6681 and ask to open a ticket to reverse the process.

Statewide Search

The "State Wide Search" button allows the DC contact to do a statewide search for a student who is not listed under the LEA. If the "State Wide Search" locates a student, you must **print a copy of the screen** prior to adding the student to your district's DC list. This provides proof that the student was found in the DC system.

DC List Codes

The "Benefit Source" column on the DC spreadsheet shows the codes for each type of DC. It is important for determining officials to use these codes when recording a student as being directly certified as free or reduced. This helps to ensure that students are included in the appropriate section on the FNS 742 Verification Collection Report. The USDA wants to know which students are directly certified as "FS," "AF", "FM", "OT," and "RM."

In addition, the LEA must extend free benefits to all children in the household if a child is listed as "FS", "AF", or "FM" on the DC list. If a child is listed as "RM," reduced-price benefits must be extended to all children in the household. If a child is listed as "OT," benefits are **not** extended to all children in the household.

Extending Eligibility

An additional feature within the "State Wide Search" tab is the ability to search by the **Authorized Unit (AU) Number**. The AU is a data element that can be found on the "Review Matched" report and represents the unique number for a SNAP or TFA **household**. This AU Number will be shared by each child within the same household. It is therefore a good way to track households with multiple last names, and to track siblings within the household that attend different schools within the district.

Figure 1. "State Wide Search" Tab Showing AU Number

Resources

Common Acronyms and Abbreviations for Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/acronyms_abbreviations_determining_eligibility_meals_milk_snp.pdf

Determining Foster Children's Eligibility for Free Meals or Milk (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/forms/freered/foster_children_eligibility.pdf

Direct Certification Contact List for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/directcert/direct_certification_contact_list.pdf

Direct Certification for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/direct-certification

Direct Certification Upload Process for Private Schools (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/directcert/direct_certification_upload_private_schools.pdf

Direct Certification Web Application (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/direct-certification

Direct Certification with Medicaid: Steps to Consider when Working with Point-of-Sale (POS) Software Companies (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/directcert/direct_certification_medicaid_steps_pos_software.pdf

Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/eligibility-for-free-and-reduced-price-meals-and-free-milk-in-school-nutrition-programs

Eligibility Manual for School Meals (USDA):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/forms/freered/usda_eligibility_manual.pdf

Interschool Agreements (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/lists/forms-school-nutrition-programs/interschool-agreements

Module 3: Direct Certification of Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program (CSDE's Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/eligibility-for-free-and-reduced-price-meals-and-free-milk-in-school-nutrition-programs/determining-eligibility-training

Parent/Guardian Notification Letters ("Parent and Guardian Notification Letters" section of CSDE's Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs:
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/eligibility-for-free-and-reduced-price-meals-and-free-milk-in-school-nutrition-programs/parent-and-guardian-notification-letters

Questions? Contact the Help Desk at 860-713-6681.

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/important_reminders_completing_direct_certification.pdf.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

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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