VERMONT
AGENCY OF EDUCATION
CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

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Eligibility Determination and Verification Process Timeline
School Year 2021-2022

July 1 or Earlier

- Prepare Free & Reduced-Price Meal Applications and Cover Letters, Household Income Forms and Cover Letters (CEP and Provision 2 schools only), or Free Milk Applications and Cover Letters (only for schools without meal programs) using AOE templates.
- Choose Determining Official, Verifying Official, and Hearing Official for your SFA, enter their names and contact information in the 'Determining and Hearing Official' tab of the School Nutrition Program application in Harvest.
- Determine who the Independent Reviewer will be if your SFA is on the Independent Review List.
- **30-day Carryover:**
  - **If operating SSO:** Prior-year eligibility (from SY19-20 or SY20-21) will carry over throughout this school year into the first 30 operating days of next school year (SY22-23) unless a new application has been submitted. If a new application has been submitted, the most current information should be used. If your Point of Sale (POS) system or Student Information System is automatically set to clear student statuses on the 30th operating day, please make sure that date is now set to October 2022.
  - **If operating NSLP:** Enter carryover information into the POS system for students to carry over their prior year's benefits. Determine and enter the 30th operating day of school, which is when carryover benefits will cease.
- If you will be using an electronic free and reduced-price meal application for the first time, contact the State Agency to have the system reviewed and approved. In the 'Eligibility' tab of your School Nutrition Program application in Harvest, indicate if you will be using an online application system.

Early August

- Attend the applicable Eligibility Determination and Verification classes at 2021 Virtual Child Nutrition Summer Institute.
  - Choose which is appropriate for each Official based on their level of experience and training: *Refresher on Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced Price School Meals for Experienced Determining Officials* or *Modules 1-3 of Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced Price School Meals*.
  - If your SFA is on the Independent Review List be sure the Independent Reviewer attends *Modules 1-3 of Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced Price School Meals.*
  - If your SFA is on the Ameliorative Action List, or has a new Verifying Official, plan to attend *Verification Process for School Meals*.

August, and Then Monthly

- Make Direct Certification determinations and update your master list. Direct Certification data is uploaded from DCF around the 20th of each month. AOE sends a monthly notification to the Business Managers and Food Service Directors Listservs when the new data is available.

- - **Public Schools:** The Data Manger uploads a DC#03 unofficial enrollment list into the EdFusion system and downloads the direct certification matches the following day.
  - **Independent Schools:** Contact the AOE Help Desk at AOE.SLDSSupportGroup@vermont.gov to request a secure email chain. Once you receive a secure email you may reply within that secure thread with an Independent School Direct Certification Status Form.
- Contact the Homeless Liaison for a list of students that may be directly certified for free meals because of their homeless or runaway status. Add these students to your master list.
- If Head Start students eat school meals, contact the Head Start teacher for a list of Head Start students. Add these students to your master list as directly certified for free meals.
- Look for letters to principals and foodservice from the Migrant Education Program with the names of any students enrolled in the Migrant Education Program. Add these students to your master list as directly certified for free meals.
- Contact the registrar for the names of any students in DCF custody (State-placed foster). Add these students to your master list as directly certified for free meals.
- Complete and send Notification of Direct Certification Pre-Approval for School Meals Letters to directly certified households.
- Ensure that directly certified students are correctly categorized as 'free' in your POS system.

First Day of School (if not mailed out prior)

- Distribute Applications for Free and Reduced Price School Meals and Meal Application Cover Letter and Instructions to all Students in the appropriate languages. These materials can be found on AOE's Free and Reduced Meals page under the 'Applications and Related Templates for the School Meals Programs' section. (*Please note: If operating SSO, Applications for Free and Reduced Price School Meals must still be collected. These applications can help qualify children for Pandemic-EBT funds as well as help qualify schools, SFAs, and households for many other benefits.*)
- If not using an electronic system, start a Master List to track student status of Free Eligibility (by Income, Categorical Eligibility, or Direct Certification) and Reduced-Price Eligibility over the course of the year.

Sept 30, 2021

- Deadline to submit Letter of Intent to Participate in CEP, if planning to begin CEP in the upcoming school year.

Within the First 4 Weeks of Operation (for those operating the NSLP Afterschool Snack Program)

- Complete the NSLP Afterschool Snack Service Site Monitoring Form for all sites. This is one of two required Afterschool Snack reviews to be conducted during the year. The second monitoring review must be completed before the end of program operation.

As Applications Are Submitted

- Process applications as they are submitted and notify households as quickly as possible of their status, taking no longer than 10 operating days to notify households of their eligibility determination.
- Enter updated student eligibility into POS System.
- Be sure to mark all error prone applications during the eligibility determination process; these will be used to determine your verification sample. (*Please note: If operating SSO, applications are still being collected, and therefore verification must still be conducted.*)

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20th Operating Day of School
- **If operating SSO:** No action required. Prior-year eligibility (from SY19-20 or SY20-21) will carry over throughout this school year into the first 30 operating days of next school year (SY22-23) unless a new application has been submitted. Do not distribute Reminder Letters.
- **If operating NSLP:** Distribute Reminder Letters notifying that previous year's benefits will end on the 30th day of school.

30th Operating Day of School
- **If operating SSO:** Prior-year eligibility (from SY19-20 or SY20-21) will carry over throughout this school year into the first 30 operating days of next school year (SY22-23) unless a new application has been submitted. If your Point of Sale system or Student Information System is automatically set to clear student statuses on the 30th operating day, please make sure that date is now set to October 2022.
- **If operating NSLP:** Update the POS system to ensure students with prior year free- or reduced-eligibility who have not submitted a new application, or been newly determined directly certified, are marked as 'paid' in the system.

October 1
- Begin the Verification process:
  - Determine the number of approved applications on file, this is the Sample Pool.
  - Enter the number of approved applications on file in the Verification Calculator to determine the number of applications that must be chosen for verification, this is the Sample Size. Make note about "Standard Method" of verification.
  - Select the Sample Size from the error prone applications.
  - Track the verification process in the Verification Log Worksheet.
  - Record application and eligible student data in the Paper Copy of the Verification Report.
- Last possible day to decide to start a Provision 2 base year, for schools with an Aug./Sept. start date.

October 15
- Deadline to submit the Policy Statement for Free and Reduced Meals: Provision 2 Amendment or CEP Amendment for schools in their base year of Provision 2 or first year of Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

November 15
- Deadline to complete the Verification process. *

  * SFAs that will not complete the Verification Process by November 15th must request a waiver from the State Agency.

December 15
- Deadline to submit the Verification Report Data Collection in Harvest.
- Deadline to complete and submit the Site Enrollment Data Collection in Harvest, reporting 10/31 data.

January 15
- Deadline to submit the Financial Report in Harvest.

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February 1 (for those operating NSLP or SBP)

- Deadline to conduct Site Reviews of each site/school if SFA has more than site/school and complete On-Site Monitoring Form for all sites.
- Deadline to complete Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Monitoring Form.

Sometime During School Year 2021-2022

- **For those operating SSO:** Complete the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) Site Monitoring Form for all sites.
- **For those operating NSLP Afterschool Snack Program:** Complete the NSLP Afterschool Snack Service Site Monitoring Form for the second, and final of the year, Afterschool Snack monitoring review.

Late February or Early March (Exact Date, TBD).

- Deadline to submit the Independent Review Report, if applicable.

April 1-15

- Submit the Direct Certification Report/Community Eligibility Report in Harvest. **This report is required of all SFAs.**

June 30

- Deadline to submit Letter of Intent to Participate in CEP, if planning to begin CEP in school year '22-'23.

As new students arrive

- **Public Schools:** Ask Data Manager to add new student to the unofficial enrollment list and retrieve the DC #03 to determine if students are directly certified.
- **Independent Schools:** Contact the AOE Help Desk at AOE.SLDSSupportGroup@vermont.gov to request a secure email chain. Once you receive a secure email you may reply within that secure thread with the name of the new student in the Independent School Direct Certification Status Form.
- Provide Free & Reduced-Price Meal Application and Cover Letter to new households as part of enrollment packet.

Please refer to USDA's Eligibility Manual for School Meals for guidance on the process of eligibility determination and verification.

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Process Timeline
(Revised: December 6, 2021)

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter 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;

2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or

3. email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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