

PPER Email 2014-5: National School Lunch Program

Children eligible for free national school meals are automatically determined eligible through a direct certification process implemented through a quarterly data match. DTA provides a list of children receiving SNAP and/or TAFDC benefits to DESE for direct certification for free meals. Once certified, children are eligible for free meals for the entire school year. If a child moves to another school district mid-year, the new school is able to verify and document the direct certification completed earlier in the year by accessing the Virtual Gateway Common Intake portal.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 amended the National School Lunch and child care food programs. One of these changes prohibits SNAP households, determined eligible at zero benefits, from being eligible for the free national school meals and child care feeding programs. Therefore, a child who is a member of a household that is eligible for SNAP at zero benefits is **NOT** eligible for free meals. This includes the program of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNA) benefits (Operations Memo 2012-12) since these are funded through state funds.

Children living in households eligible at zero benefits may be eligible for reduced meals. Parents must submit a paper application to the school district to verify eligibility for reduced meals. Eligibility for reduced meals is based on income; parents will need to submit verification of income to the school district. DTA Staff do **NOT** need to provide income verification for the national reduced meals program. If you have any questions regarding this change, please call the policy hotline.