# DIRECT CERTIFICATION IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Direct certification is available to school food authorities for the purpose of identifying certain children who are eligible for free meals or milk without application. To maximize the benefits of direct certification and reduce the administrative burden of collecting and processing meal applications, the following activities should be completed before the beginning of the school year. Households receiving benefits from CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps), California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) may be directly certified to receive free meals or free milk.

## **BEFORE** IMPLEMENTATION OF DIRECT CERTIFICATION:

1. Contact the County Welfare Department or the County Office of Education to ascertain the method you will use to obtain the names of students from households currently certified to receive CalFresh or CalWORKs benefits.

2. Determine and negotiate the responsibility for any cost associated with producing these lists.

3. Request that the County Welfare Department or the County Office of Education provide a list of names of the children who are members of households currently certified to receive CalFresh or CalWORKs benefits. This list must include a welfare official's signature and date of certification. The signature or contact information is sufficient if the list is sent by email.

4. Enter into an agreement with the County Welfare Department or the County Office of Education regarding the confidentiality of the information received.

## **TO IMPLEMENT** DIRECT CERTIFICATION:

1. Prior to the beginning of the school year and no sooner than July 1, send the *Pricing Letter to Household (Form ID: SNP Eligibility 01) or Nonpricing Letter to Household (Form ID: SNP Eligibility 02)* to the households of all children.

2. Conduct a monthly local level direct certification match with the County Welfare Department or County Office of Education and a statewide direct certification match with CALPADS if accessible.

3. If the students are directly certified, distribute the *Direct Certification Notification Letter* (Form ID: SNP Eligibility 04 [UM]) to the household.

4. If eligibility materials are distributed any way other than mail, email, or individualized packets, include in your *Policy Statement Addendum Direct Certification Procedures* a description of how overt identification is prevented. Maintain documentation of the procedures used to administer direct certification as part of your policy statement.

5. Once directly certified, student eligibility determinations are valid for the remainder of the school year, and 30-days into the subsequent school year or until another eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first. There is no need to report changes to eligibility unless there is a greater benefit available to the student.

6. Maintain documentation of the households notified of direct certification and of the children directly certified to receive free meals or milk.

## **AFTER** IMPLEMENTATION OF DIRECT CERTIFICATION:

1. Maintain a list of the names of the children from households currently receiving CalFresh or CalWORKs benefits that is retrievable by school site, as well as by track, for year-round schools.

2. Maintain documentation on households eligible for free meals or milk that decline to participate. This documentation may be obtained in writing or by verbal contact with the household. If contact is verbal, proper documentation would include the name of the person declining benefits, the phone number of that person, the date the household declined benefits, and the name of the school official who received the verbal decline.

California Department of Education

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