

Verification—Table of Contents

Defining Verification	6.1
When to Begin Verification	6.1
Tips on Meeting the Verification Deadline	6.2
<i>Procedures to Prevent Overlooking Verification Deadline</i>	
General Requirements of Verification	6.3
Example of Condition #2 Non-Response Rate Improvement	6.5
Direct Verification	6.6
Confirmation Review	6.7
Sample Size Requirements—Basic Sampling (Error Prone)	6.8
<i>Replacing Applications</i>	
<i>Steps to Error Prone Sampling</i>	
<i>Error Prone Sampling Worksheet</i>	
<i>Selecting Error Prone Applications Using Applications with Single Source Income</i>	
Sample Size Requirements—Alternate Method 1	6.9
<i>Steps to Alternate Method 1</i>	
<i>Alternate Method 1 Sampling Worksheet</i>	
Sample Size Requirements—Alternate Method 2	6.10
<i>Steps to Alternate Method 2</i>	
<i>Alternate Method 2 Sampling Worksheet</i>	
Notifying Households of Selection	6.12
<i>Exception to Notification</i>	
Verification for Cause	6.13
Defining Documentation	6.14
Documentation Methods	6.14
1. <i>Written Evidence</i>	
<i>Request for Written Evidence of Income Eligibility</i>	
<i>Gross Income</i>	
<i>Income Exclusions</i>	
2. <i>Collateral Contacts</i>	
3. <i>Agency Records</i>	
<i>SNAP/TANF Records</i>	
Foster Children	6.20
<i>Verification of Foster Children</i>	
<i>Reporting Foster Children on Verification Report</i>	
Unacceptable Documentation	6.24

Unresponsive Households and Follow-Up	6.24
Defining Verification Completion	6.25
Verification Results	6.25
Notification of Adverse Action	6.26
Benefits During Appeal of Verification Results	6.27
Hearing Procedure	6.27
<i>Households that Reapply for Program Benefits</i>	
Reporting and Record Keeping Requirements	6.28
<i>Filing of Verified Applications</i>	
Letter to Households of Selection for Verification of Eligibility	6.29
Verification Information for Free and Reduced-Price Meals	6.30
Letter Household May Have Employer Complete— Statement of Earnings	6.31
Letter Household May Have Social Security Office Complete—Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	6.32
Letter Household May Have SNAP/TANF Office Complete—Statement of SNAP/TANF Benefits	6.33
Letter to the SNAP/TANF Office from the Local Education Agency	6.34
Verification Form—SNAP/TANF Recipients (Multiple Applicants)	6.35
Letter of Verification Results and Adverse Action for Income Households	6.36
Letter of Adverse Action for SNAP/TANF Households	6.37
Notification of Continuation of Benefits as a Result of Verification (Optional)	6.38
LEA Verification Summary Worksheet (Optional)	6.39
Verification Record	6.40

Verification

Defining Verification

Verification is confirmation of eligibility for free and reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP). Verification must include either confirmation of income eligibility or confirmation that the children is included in a currently certified household receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly food stamps) or a Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits.

Note: Prior to 2004, the term “school food authority” was used for local agencies administering the school meals programs. In 2004, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act added the term “local education agency” to identify the entity responsible for application, certification and verification activities for the NSLP, SBP and Special Milk Program (SMP). Refer to Section 4 for the full definition of local education agency (LEA) and contracting entity (CE).

Residential Child Care Institution (RCCIs): Refer to Section 26, Residential Child Care Institutions for additional information regarding verification.

When to Begin Verification

The first consideration in designing a verification plan is when to begin the process. Consider the following:

- The verification official is not required to wait until October 1 to begin. LEAs are encouraged to begin as early as possible, especially if it has been difficult to meet the deadline in the past.
- To begin the verification process earlier, estimate how many applications will be on file on October 1. This estimate should be based on the number of applications from previous years. The number of applications to verify is then calculated based on this estimate.
- On October 1, a check must be made of the actual number of approved applications on file to determine if enough applications have been selected. If necessary, additional applications must be selected at this time. When determining the required sample size of applications to be verified, round all fractions upward. At least one application must always be verified.
- Initially, an application must be approved before it can be verified. Denied applications are not verified. The verification process may begin on an application immediately after it has been approved. LEAs cannot verify 100% of their applications and may not ask for income information at the time of application. Verification done “for cause” is done in addition to the required verification sample size.

- Children directly certified, foster children, runaway, homeless, migrant, Head Start, Early Head Start, Even Start categorically eligible, children living in residential child care institutions (RCCIs) and Provision 2 (P2) students (unless establishing base year) should not be included in the count. These children should not be counted as verified.
- Applications for children who receive benefits as a result of extending categorical eligibility to additional children in the household **are** subject to verification. If benefits are extended based on an application with a SNAP or TANF benefits number, the application is included in the sample and subject to verification. In Texas, SNAP and TANF benefits are based on household rather than individual. Therefore, there may not be any SNAP/TANF applications to verify based on this policy.
- If an application is used only to record and confirm household composition where another child in the household has been directly certified, the application is **not** included in the sample or subject to verification because verification is not required for children identified through direct certification.
- RCCIs are exempt from eligibility determination and the annual process if they have no day student enrollees. RCCIs with day students must still determine eligibility and perform the annual verification process from a sample of all day students using the methods in this section.

Tips on Meeting the Verification Deadline

Verification is an annual requirement with the same deadline, November 15, each school year. The deadline is the same whether it falls on a weekday or weekend. Verification reports are due to TDA State Office by February 1st annually. Verification efforts and the results of verification are reported in the Texas Unified Nutrition Programs System (TX-UNPS). Forms to report verification are also available on www.squaremeals.org.

Procedures to Prevent Overlooking Verification Deadline

1. Mark the date verification is to begin and the deadline for its completion on the school calendar of events or a calendar noting other important dates and deadlines.
2. Ensure that more than one person is aware of the deadline and of the verification requirements. Assign an alternate verification official, if necessary. This will help if one of the persons is suddenly unavailable to conduct verification.
3. Develop a written verification plan that includes the methods to be used and the time frames by which each step must be accomplished. The basic plan can be used year after year and can be given to new personnel to help them complete the process more easily in their first year of responsibility for verification.
4. Allow sufficient time for agencies (e.g., SNAP and/or TANF office) to confirm household eligibility. Thirty days is the minimum time an LEA should allow for agencies to confirm household eligibility when using agency records in this process.

General Requirements of Verification

In the verification process, the LEA must conduct the following:

- Annually, each LEA must select and verify a sample of applications approved for benefits. Households whose children are Head Start, Early Head Start or Even Start categorically eligible, foster children, runaway, homeless or migrant are exempt from verification unless an application has been submitted for the child(ren). Households with children that are directly certified through the use of the direct certification list, or residents at an RCCI facility are exempt from verification. Denied applications should not be included in the sample.
- The required sample size is based on the following:
 1. The total number of approved applications on file on October 1. This may be completed either at the beginning or end of the day and before or after the quarterly October 1 direct certification updated has been received. (Households whose children are directly certified, foster children (see note below), runaway, homeless, migrant, Head Start, Early Head Start or Even Start categorically eligible, or residents at an RCCI facility for free meal benefits are excluded from this process).

Note: If applications are received for children who receive SNAP or TANF benefits or are categorically eligible, the application must be included when selecting the sample for verification.

- Regulations require that any method used for selecting applications to be verified must be nondiscriminatory. All sampling methods, error prone, alternate method 1 and alternate method 2, must meet this requirement.
2. The LEA will select for verification either 3,000 or three percent of all approved applications, whichever is the lowest. This is the basic sample size for verification. Basic error-prone applications are those that have reported incomes near the eligibility criteria. The reported income is within \$100 per month for reduced-price or free or \$1,200 per year for reduced-price or free from the eligibility guidelines.
 - Error-prone applications do not include SNAP/TANF applications. These applications are approved by the categorically eligible status of the applicants. If the error-prone applications do not meet the 3 percent or 3,000 applications sample size, the LEA must then select the difference from all Alternate Sample Sizes.

3. Condition #1

LEAs may be able to reduce the amount of applications that are verified if they meet specific criteria based on the “non-response” rate for the preceding school year. The non-response rate is defined as the percentage of applications selected for verification for which the LEA has not obtained a verification information response. To determine the non-response percentage rate, divide the number of non-response applications for the preceding year by the total number of applications selected for verification for that same year. Note that the number of students on the application or the number of students whose benefits changed is not part of the non-response rate. The non-response rate is based only on the total number of applications selected and those that did not respond to verification.

The following are considered non-responses:

- The household does not contact the LEA when the initial request for verification is sent or when the LEA attempts follow-up;
- The household responds to the initial request but provides incomplete information and the LEA is unable to determine if the eligibility determination was correct; or
- The household responds to the initial request but fails to provide the LEA with documents or is otherwise unable to provide appropriate documentation.

Any of these outcomes must be reported as “Did Not Respond” in Box 11 on the “LEA Verification Summary”.

Examples of Non-Response Rates

The LEA may qualify for alternate sample sizes if the non-response rate for the preceding school year was less than 20 percent. If this condition is met, the LEA may choose one of the alternate sample sizes.

- **Alternate Method 1**
Three percent of the October 1 count of total approved applications or 3,000 approved applications, whichever is less, selected at random without consideration of error prone.
- **Alternate Method 2**
One percent of the October 1 count of total approved applications or 1,000 approved applications, whichever is less, from error prone applications; plus, .5 percent or 500 applications, whichever is less, from applications that were approved with a case number or

Eligibility Determination Group number (EDG #) for the SNAP/TANF programs.

4. Condition #2:
- a. LEAs that have more than 20,000 students approved by application that meet at least one of the following sub-conditions. **Note:** students that are directly certified or categorically eligible are not included in the 20,000 approved students unless an application has been submitted for that student, or
 - b. The non-response rate for last year’s verification was at least 10 percent below the non-response rate for the preceding school year. The LEA may do an alternate sample size.

Alternate Methods:

- **Alternate Method 1**
Three percent of the October 1 count of total approved applications or 3,000 applications, whichever is less, selected at random without consideration of error-prone.
- **Alternate Method 2**
One percent of the October 1 count of total approved applications or 1,000 applications, whichever is less, from error-prone applications; plus, 0.5 percent or 500 applications, whichever is less, from applications that were approved with a case number for the SNAP/TANF program.

Example of Condition #2 Non-Response Rate Improvement

The following is a scenario to aid the LEA in determining non-response rate improvement over the second preceding school year. The numbers used in this scenario are only for ease of calculation. LEAs must have a total of 20,000 students approved by application to utilize this option.

Second Preceding School Year		
Approved Applications	Sample Size	Non-response Rate
300 Approved Applications	(3% of 300)* = 9 to Verify	4 Non-response = 44% (4 ÷ 9)

To calculate the non-response rate needed to use an alternate sample size:

Preceding School Year		
<u>Improvement</u> must be at least 10%		
Second preceding year non-response rate	10% Improvement rate needed	Non-response rate needed for alternate sample size
44%	$44\% \times 10\% = 4.4\%$ $44\% - 4.4\% = 39.6\%$	39.6% (40% or lower) Use normal rounding

Preceding School Year (actual numbers)		
Approved Applications	Sample Size	Non-response rate
320 Approved Applications	$(3\% \text{ of } 320)^* = 10$ to verify Always round up to the nearest whole number	3 non-response = 30% $3 \div 10 = 30\%$

* If Alternate Method 2 was used, sample size would be 1 1/2 % of approved applications.

Since the preceding year's non-response rate (30%) improved by at least 10 percent over the second preceding school year's non-repose rate (44%), the LEA is eligible to use one of the alternate sample sizes for the current school year's verification process.

REMINDER: Annually, you must use the school information from the two years prior to the current school year to complete the process detailed above. There must be at least a 10 percent improvement in the non-response rate between the two years prior to the current school year.

Direct Verification

Direct verification is using records from public agencies to verify income and/or program participation. Direct verification in Texas is complete at the local level through a system provided through the Texas Unified Nutrition Programs System (TX-UNPS). If the CE is not able to pull up a child's name using the Direct Verification list, the CE **must** continue with the normal verification process by requesting the appropriate documentation from the household.

LEAs are not required to conduct direct verification.

Confirmation Review

Regardless of which method LEAs choose to conduct their verification, they must first review all the selected applications to ensure that the initial determination was accurate.

This is called the “confirmation review.” The individual who conducts this review is called the “confirming official.” This must be a different individual than the “reviewing official” who signed the application to establish initial eligibility. Documentation of the confirmation review must be kept on file by the LEA.

The confirmation review can occur in one of two ways:

1. It can occur immediately after the initial review and consequently be part of the certification process. This would be the practice in schools that routinely double-check the determination on all applications (100%) before implementing the eligibility determination.
2. The other approach would be to do the confirmation review as part of the verification process, and only do a double check on those applications selected for verification. In this situation, the household has already been notified of the eligibility decision.

When the confirmation review is part of the verification process the following requirements apply:

1. If the confirmation review indicates that the new eligibility status is to the household’s benefit, the LEA should make the change as soon as possible, notify the household of the increased benefit and proceed with verification.
2. If the confirmation review shows that there should be a decrease in benefits, the LEA proceeds with and completes verification before any notification of a new eligibility status is given. These procedures are designed to avoid a possible unnecessary reduction in benefits.
3. If the confirming review shows the initial eligibility was correct, the LEA verifies the application.

Documentation of the confirmation review must be kept on files by the LEA. The LEA must document on the actual application selected for verification, that the confirming official performed a review of the application.

The requirement for a confirmation review may be waived if the LEA has a technology-based system that demonstrates a high-degree of accuracy. Any LEA that has an automated system for processing applications must contact TDA to determine if its system qualifies.

TDA provides LEAs with the template for a letter to households for applications that are chosen for verification. That template letter now must include a telephone number the household can use to contact the LEA free or charge or the LEA must allow the household to reverse the charges if any household in the LEA are outside the local calling area.

Sample Size Requirements – Basic Sampling (Error Prone)

This method requires the verification of the lesser of 3,000 or three percent of all approved applications on file as the basic sample size on October 1. All applications selected from verification must be error-prone. Error-prone applications are those with reported income near the eligibility guidelines within \$100.00 per month or \$1,200 per year of the eligibility guidelines.

Replacing Applications

After completing the confirmation reviews, the LEA may, on a case-by-case basis, replace up to five percent of applications if the household is a “fragile household.” Fragile household is defined as a household that would be unable to satisfactorily respond to verification due to language barriers or life crisis in the household.

Any application removed must be replaced with another application selected on the same basis (i.e., error-prone application). The newly selected application must then have a confirmation review.

In those LEAs where three percent of the total applications result in less than one, one application may still be replaced. All results of the three percent calculation are rounded up to the next whole number.

6. Follow-up Official

If a household fails to respond to the LEA’s first correspondence, the LEA, through an individual designated as the “follow-up official,” must make at least one subsequent attempt to obtain the necessary verification form from the household. That attempt can be done by mail, telephone, e-mail or personal contact, and the follow-up official may be the determining official, the confirming official or other appropriate staff member. The LEA must document, on the actual application, each attempt to contact the household for verification. If the LEA is unable to verify the household’s eligibility after at least one follow-up attempt, the household’s benefit must be terminated through a notice of adverse action.

Steps to Error-Prone Sampling

1. Sample Size – the number of applications on file as of October 1.
2. (Total number of applications) X .03 or 3,000, whichever is less.
3. Round all fractions upward.
4. At least one application must be verified.
5. Error-prone applications do not include SNAP/TANF.
6. Non-error-prone applications may be selected at random from all applications only after all error-prone applications have been selected.
7. Verify the sample of applications.

Error-Prone Sampling Worksheet

Basic Sample Size

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{_____} \text{ Number of approved applications on file on October 1} \\ & \quad \text{(total free income and reduced-price plus SNAP/TANF = Sample)} \\ \\ & \text{X } \underline{\text{_____ } 0.03} \\ \\ & = \text{_____} \text{ or 3,000 applications, whichever is less (Round all decimals upward).} \end{aligned}$$

Selecting Error-Prone Applications Using Applications with Single Source Income

If the household provides only one income frequency then the application should have been approved based on the income frequency provided. For example, one time frequency is designated (i.e., Weekly), the application should be approved based on the weekly income provided and not converted to an annual income. If there is more than one time frequency (weekly and monthly), then the LEA should convert to **annual income**.

Income Provided by the Household

Weekly ¹	\$23.08
Bi-weekly ²	\$46.15
Twice/Month ³	\$50.00
Monthly ⁴	\$100.00
Annual	\$1,200.00

Conversions

¹ 23.08/weekly X 52 weeks/year = \$1,200.16 = \$1,200 annual

² 46.15/every 2 weeks X 26 bi-weeks/year = \$1,199.90 = \$1,200 annual

³ 50.00/2 times/month X 24 times/year = \$1,200 annual

⁴ 100.00/month X 12 months/year = \$1,200 annual

Note: Income applications converted to an annual amount are considered to be error-prone if the annual amount falls within \$1,200 of the Annual Income Eligibility Guidelines.

Sample Size Requirements – Alternate Method 1

This method requires the verification of the lesser of 3 percent or 3,000 of the approved applications on file on October 1, selected randomly. Under Alternate Method 1, each application must have an equal chance of being selected.

Steps to Alternate Method 1

1. Sample Size:

- Determine sample size. Multiply the total number of approved applications on file on October 1:

$$() \times .03 = () \text{ or, } 3,000, \text{ whichever is less.}$$

- Round all fractions upwards to whole numbers.
- At least one application must be verified.

2. Randomly select the required number of applications.

A selection interval may be used. This can be accomplished by dividing the total number of approved applications on file in the LEA by the sample size to determine the selection interval (if there are 300 applications on file and 9 are required to be verified, divide 300 by 9 = 33.3). In this case, the selection interval is 33. Number all applications. Randomly select an application from the total approved, and then choose every 33rd application until 9 applications have been selected.

3. Verify the sampling of applications.

Alternate Method 1 Sampling Worksheet

Required Sample Size

_____ Total Number of approved applications on file on October 1
(total free income and reduced-price plus SNAP/TANF = Sample)

X 0.03

= _____ or 3,000 applications, whichever is less (Round all decimals upward.)

Randomly select the required number of application.

The LEA has an obligation to verify all questionable applications “for cause.” Any verification that is conducted “for cause” is in addition to the sample required.

Sample Size Requirements – Alternate Method 2

This method requires the verification of the lesser of 1% or 1,000 of total approved applications on file on October 1, selected from approved error-prone applications, PLUS the lesser of .5% or 500 approved categorically eligible applications on which SNAP/TANF case numbers are reported.

Steps to Alternate Method 2

1. Determining income application sample size:

- Determine sample size: Total number of all approved applications on file on October 1:

$$() \times .01 = () \text{ or } 1,000 \text{ whichever is less.}$$

- Round all fractions upward to whole numbers.
- Separate applications into SNAP/TANF and income applications.
- Select income applications with reported income within \$100 a month or \$1,200 a year of the free and reduced-price meals eligibility guidelines until you reach the required sample size.

Verify applications from both the free and reduced-price meals categories.

- Reach the required sample size. Remember that the sample size is 1% of the **total** applications, not 1% of the income applications.
 - 1) If there are more applications than needed that meet the criteria, select the sample from those applications using any method that is equitable, for example, randomly.
 - 2) If there are not enough applications that meet the criteria, verify all error-prone applications and then randomly select additional approved applications from both income and SNAP/TANF applications to complete the required sample size.
 - 3) If there are not enough income applications overall to meet the required minimum, verify all income applications.
 - 4) At least one income application must be verified if there are any such applications on file.
 - 5) Verify applications from both the free and reduced-price categories, if possible.

2. Determining SNAP/TANF sample size:

- Determine sample size:

$$\text{Total number of SNAP/TANF applications} \times .005 = () \text{ or } 500, \text{ whichever is less.}$$

- Round all fractions upward to whole numbers.
- Select sample from SNAP/TANF applications using any method that is equitable and ensures that the same household is not selected each year.
- At least one SNAP/TANF applications must be verified if there are any such applications on file.

3. Verify the sampling of applications from both groups 1 and 2.

Alternate Method 2 Sampling Worksheet

Required Number of Applications with Income Information to Verify

_____ Total Number of approved applications on file on October 1

X 0.01

= _____ or 1,000 applications, whichever is less (Round all decimals upward.)

From the applications with income information, select applications with reported income of \$100 a month (\$1,200 a year) of the free and reduced-price eligibility guidelines. Continue selecting applications until the required number of applications are chosen.

Required SNAP/TANF Eligible Sample

_____ Total Number of SNAP/TANF eligible applications on file on October 1

X 0.05

= _____ or 500 applications, whichever is less (Round all decimals upward.)

From the applications with a SNAP/TANF, Eligibility Group Number (EDG), or a SAVVER or TANF case number, select applications until the required number of applications are chosen.

The LEA has an obligation to verify all questionable applications “for cause”. Any verification that is conducted “for cause” is in addition to the sample required for Alternate Method 2.

Notifying Households of Selection

When a household is selected for verification and is required by the LEA to submit documents or other forms of evidence to verify eligibility, the household must be sent a notice/letter informing them of their selection and the types of information acceptable to the LEA. Refer to the end of this section for a sample household notification letter.

The letter/notice to households must include:

1. That the household has been selected for verification.
2. The types of acceptable information that may be provided to confirm current income, including pay stubs, award letters from welfare departments, Social Security and support payment decrees from courts. Refer to the Documentation Methods in this section for an example.
3. That the household may submit documentation of income received for a full month for any time between the month prior to the application through the time period the household is required to provide the documentation.
4. That the household may provide proof that the child is a member of a currently verified SNAP/TANF household instead of providing income information of adult household members.
5. That information must be provided by a date as specified by the LEA and that failure to do so will result in termination of benefits.
6. The name and telephone number of a school official who can answer questions and provide assistance without charge.

Exception to Notification

When using agency records exclusively to verify eligibility of a household, a selection notice is not required because the household will not have to provide documents or information. Agency records include information received from a SNAP or TANF office or other government agency. This information could include confirmation of SNAP or TANF participation or income confirmation. Refer to Agency Records in this section for additional information on verification through agency records.

Verification for Cause

Federal regulations state that an LEA “must verify any questionable application and should, on a case-by-case basis, verify any application for cause...when the school is aware of additional income or persons in the household.”

LEAs can use verification for cause to review approved applications when known or available information indicates that CE employees may have misrepresented their incomes on the school meal application for their children. TDA recommends that the CE consult with legal counsel in establishing the parameters of verification for cause for CE employees.

Verification for cause must not be used to automatically verify the households of all CE employees whose children are certified for free or reduced-price meals. However, from among the list of children approved for free or reduced-price meals, an LEA could identify children of CE employees and use LEA salary information available to them to identify questionable applications and then conduct verifications for cause on those questionable applications.

Note: Any verification for cause conducted by an LEA is separate from the verification sample and may be conducted at any time during the school year. LEAs must also follow the confidentiality, notice and appeal procedures when conducting any type of verification, including verification for cause. Any changes to a student's eligibility status cannot be made until the verification process and any appeals from the household are complete.

Defining Documentation

Once households have received their notification of selection for verification, they are to send in documentation that verifies their eligibility. There are three methods of documenting household eligibility:

- 1) Written evidence,
- 2) Collateral contacts, and
- 3) Agency records.

Any one or a combination of these methods may be used to complete verification. Written evidence is the primary type of documentation. This is evidence submitted by the household that documents the household's income or current participation in the SNAP or TANF program.

When agency records and/or collateral contacts are used; eligibility documentation is obtained from sources other than the household.

Documentation Methods

1. Written Evidence

This is information received directly from the household, such as income documentation or proof of SNAP/TANF participation when submitted by the household. Whenever possible, use written evidence as the primary source of information to confirm household eligibility.

The notification of selection for verification must include a request for the household to submit written evidence of income for all household members or written evidence to show that the household receives SNAP or TANF for the child.

If a household requests that documentation be returned, the LEA should comply with the request.

If the household does not respond to the request for income information and/or written evidence of participation in the SNAP or TANF program or submits insufficient or obsolete written evidence, the LEA must contact the household to request the missing written evidence and inform the household that failure to comply or to designate a collateral contact will result in termination.

School officials may terminate the household for failure to respond to the request for written evidence. Verification is considered completed when the advance notice of adverse action is sent to the household.

Request for Written Evidence of Income Eligibility

When providing written evidence of proof of income, households must submit documents that show income for a period of one month. The document should contain the name of the household member, amount and the date the income was received. A pay stub with no date would be insufficient.

Examine the documentation of income submitted by the household for:

- Name;
- Date; and
- Amount of income stated to determine if it is sufficient to document total income.

Gross Income

Gross income to be reported by non-categorically eligible households (non-SNAP/non-TANF) is any money received on a recurring basis including gross earned income. Specifically, gross income means all money earned before any deductions, such as:

- Income taxes.
- Employee's social security taxes.
- Insurance premiums.
- Bonds.
- Charitable contributions.

Other cash income would include cash amounts received or withdrawn from any source, including savings, investments, trust accounts, and other resources which would be available to pay the price of a child's meal.

"Income" does not include any income or benefits received under any federal programs that are excluded from consideration as income by any legislative prohibition.

In general, anything considered as income for the initial application process is also considered as income for verification purposes. Households must provide income information **for a period of one month**. The following listing contains suggestions of sources of acceptable types of written evidence to be used as income documentation. This list is not exclusive and additional sources may be requested.

- **Earnings – Wages and Salary:** Total or gross earnings before the withholding for the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA), taxes or other deductions, such as insurance.

Acceptable documentation is:

- Current paycheck stub.
- Current pay envelope.
- Letter from employer stating gross wages paid and how often they are paid.

If overtime is reported, the school official should work with the household to determine whether the overtime for the month being verified is representative of overtime received in other months. If the overtime is a one-time or sporadic source of income, income should be calculated based on the regular monthly income (without overtime).

If one weekly pay stub is representative of what the household receives each week, one pay stub is sufficient for you to calculate a full month's income. If one weekly pay stub is not representative of what the household receives each week, pay stubs for an entire month must be submitted.

- **Earnings of Self-Employed Business Person or Farmer:** If the applicant is a self-employed business person or farmer, net income should be used. Many of the assets of self-employed business persons are on paper and their cash or net worth is often very low, although they may hold considerable property and equipment (assets). They should report only their actual cash income, not assets.

Households with other forms of income should provide information and/or documents that show the amount of income received, how often it is received and the date received. For example, acceptable documentation for self-employment income is:

- Business or farming document, such as ledger books and/or self-issued paycheck stub.
- Last year's tax return.

- **Cash Income:** Some persons who work in situations where the employer does not want to be responsible for withholdings, such as domestic workers, casual laborers, or persons working for an individual or small business on an irregular basis, may receive wages in the form of cash.

Acceptable documentation is:

- A letter from the employer stating wages paid and frequency.

- **Social Security Retirement:** More correctly named Old Age and Survivors Disability Insurance, it actually includes the traditional retirement benefit, payments to survivors (spouses and children), and disability payments. (The disability payments are similar to SSI.) Younger persons (pre-retirement) and their dependents can also receive disability payments.

Acceptable documentation is:

- Social Security retirement benefit letter.
- Official statement of benefits received.
- Monthly check.

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI):** Not a retirement pension, it is a special funding program to assist households with aged, blind, or other disabled members. Often, if a child has a learning disability, the household will receive a monthly SSI assistance payment. Some applicants will refer to these payments as “disability” and may not understand that it is a form of Social Security payment (welfare).

Acceptable documentation is:

- SSI eligibility letter.
- SSI check.
- Official statement of benefits received.
- Bank statement indicating deposit into account.

- **Unemployment Compensation/Disability or Workers’ Compensation:**

Acceptable documentation is:

- Notice of eligibility from state employment office.
- Copy of the disability award letter/unemployment compensation award letter.
- Check stub.
- Agency records.

- **Retirement/Pension:** This refers to non-Social Security retirement. It includes private pensions, state pensions, veterans, and/or military retirement.

Acceptable documentation is:

- Official statement of benefits received.
- Pension award notice.

- **R. R. Benefit or Railroad Retirement:** A special government retirement fund for former employees of the railroads. Payments can be made to survivors (spouses and children).

Acceptable documentation is:

- Official statement of benefits received.
- Railroad retirement award letter.

- **Veterans Payments:** Money paid periodically by the Veterans Administration to disabled members of the Armed Forces or to survivors of deceased veterans.

Acceptable documentation is:

- Official statement of benefits received.
 - Veterans Administration award notice.
- **Child Support or Alimony:** This is a payment by a separated or divorced spouse for the support of children or the spouse. Although the court has ordered (decreed) a monthly amount or an amount was agreed upon, payments may be infrequent or irregular. Only actual payments and not the amount that is supposed to be received should be reported.

Acceptable documentation is:

- Copies of checks or other proof of payments received (including bank statement).
 - Court decree.
 - Agreement.
- **Military Housing Allowance:** Payment may be received if an adult member of the household is a member of the military and the household is located off-base.

Acceptable documentation is:

- Leave and earnings statement.
- Letter from the base commander stating amount and frequency of allowance.

A household that does not have satisfactory SNAP/TANF documentation may request a signed, dated letter from the SNAP/TANF office certifying that the child is part of a household currently receiving benefits.

Verification is complete when the household submits adequate documentation of current participation in either the SNAP or TANF program or a letter of adverse action is sent.

Income Exclusions

Refer to Section 4, Determining Eligibility, for the list of income exclusions when conducting verification.

Note: When determining eligibility for military service members, refer to the member's Leave and Earnings Statement (LES). Do not count any amounts listed as "Combat Pay" as household income. Combat pay is also referred to by the U.S. Department of Defense as "Hostile Fire Pay/Imminent Danger Pay" (HFP/IDP). The entry on the military LES is "HFP/IDP" and may not say "combat pay"; however they should be treated equally. Please keep this in mind when conducting verification of school meal applications.

2. Collateral Contacts

A collateral contact is a person outside of the household who is knowledgeable about the household's circumstances and can give confirmation of a household's income or SNAP/TANF status.

When the household has been unable to provide adequate written evidence; the household may identify a collateral contact from which the LEA could obtain the requested information, either orally or in writing. Collateral contacts include employers, social service agencies, migrant workers' agencies, and religious or civic organizations.

The verifying official should request a collateral contact only in cases when the household has not been able to provide adequate written evidence.

The verifying official must give the household the opportunity to designate the collateral contact. However, the verifying official may select a collateral contact if the household fails to designate one or designates one that is unacceptable to the verifying official. In either case, no contact may be made without first notifying the household and obtaining their permission.

The LEA will examine any written information provided by the collateral contact or evaluate any oral information. Based on this information, a determination will be made. If the collateral contact is unwilling or unable to provide the requested information, then the household's benefit is to be terminated for failure to respond.

All collateral contacts are to be documented, dated and initialed.

3. Agency Records

A household's eligibility may be confirmed through the use of information maintained by other government agencies to which the LEA has legal access. Although USDA regulations do not require that households be notified of selection when verification is made through agency records, such agencies may have their own notification requirements.

SNAP/TANF Records

Using agency records to verify the eligibility of households who were approved for meal benefits on the basis of SNAP/TANF case numbers can be accomplished by submitting a list of names and SNAP/TANF case numbers to the state or local SNAP or welfare office. That office will then confirm whether the households are currently receiving SNAP or TANF benefits.

When using agency records, the LEA should request information for the most recent month available. Households that dispute the validity of information acquired through systems of records must be given the opportunity to send more recent information during the 10-day period of advance notice of adverse action. Refer to Adverse Action in this section.

When verifying eligibility through a SNAP/TANF office, begin as early as possible to allow sufficient time, at least 30 days, for that office to respond to the request. Additional time may also be necessary to acquire other verification information from households if the agency contacted reports that some households are not currently receiving SNAP or TANF benefits.

Refer to the end of this section for a sample letter and form to use when requesting assistance from a SNAP/TANF office.

In addition, consider reducing the number of applications verified in this manner to the minimum requirement plus any that contain information that appears questionable. In recent years, many LEAs have elected to verify through agency records 100 percent of the categorically eligible households. This places an unnecessary burden on the state and local SNAP/TANF offices.

Foster Children

Verification of Foster Children

LEAs must use the following procedures to verify foster children.

When determining the verification application pool:

Foster Children who are Directly Certified

Foster children may be identified and certified eligible through documents obtained or provided by courts or State or local foster agencies (i.e., Department of Family and Protective Services). These foster children are directly certified and not subject to verification if they are certified through this documentation.

Foster Children Appearing on an Application(s)

Foster children may be identified and certified eligible through an application if they are not directly certified. It is the foster family's choice whether to submit separate applications for the foster child and for the non-foster children in their household or combine all the children on a single application. Both types of applications would be included in the verification pool.

- If a directly certified foster child is listed on an approve application with the non-foster children in the household, that application is considered an *income* application. The application is included in the verification pool, but no eligibility verification is done for the foster child since she/he was directly certified. If the foster child has any income, it must be included on the application and is subject to verification.
- If **separate applications** are submitted and approved for the foster and non-foster children, both applications are included in the verification pool.
 - If the foster child's status was not already directly certified, the foster child is certified eligible and the application is considered a categorically eligible application and may be selected for verification when applicable.
 - If a directly certified foster child is on a separate application, the direct certification supersedes the application and therefore the application is disregarded and would not be included in the verification pool.

- If the foster family submits **one application** listing the foster child(ren) and other children in the household, the foster child is certified as categorically eligible and the other children are certified on income or other sources of categorical eligibility. The application is counted in the verification pool.
 - If the non-foster children are ineligible and the foster child is not already directly certified, the foster child is certified eligible and the application is considered a categorically eligible application and may be selected for verification when applicable.
 - If the non-foster children are certified eligible for free or reduced-price meals on the basis of income, the application is considered an income application. In addition, if the foster child's status was not already directly certified, the LEA must verify his/her status as well as other eligibility information on the application if that application is selected for verification.

Reporting Foster Children on Verification Report

1. Application that includes only foster child(ren) who are not directly certified

The student AND application must be reported as categorically eligible. LEAs must report in the following boxes:

- "Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Students"
- "Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Applications"

2. Application that includes only directly certified foster child(ren)

If an application is submitted for a foster child who is directly certified, it is reported in:

- "Free Eligible – Exempt Free".

The application is not reported and can be disregarded.

If an application is submitted for a foster child and attached documentation verified foster care status (such as a signed letter from a court or State or local foster agency; i.e., Department of Family and Protective Services), the foster child is considered directly certified. The application does not go into the verification pool and is reported in:

- "Free Eligible – Exempt Free".

The application is not reported and can be disregarded.

3. Application includes both a foster child(ren) who is not directly certified AND income eligible students

The foster child must be reported in:

- "Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Students."

Do not report the application in “Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Applications.”

The income eligible student(s) AND the application must be reported in the appropriate free and reduced-price income eligible box:

- **Students:**
 - **FREE**: Report in “Free Eligible – Income Eligible Free. As of October 31st, enter the **number of students** approved as **FREE Eligible** based on income/household size information submitted on an Application.”
 - **REDUCED-PRICE**: Report in “Reduced-Price Eligible – Income Eligible Reduced-Price. As of October 31st, enter the **number of students** approved for **REDUCED-PRICE MEALS** based on income/household size information submitted on an Application.”
- **Applications:**
 - **FREE**: Report in “Free Eligible – Income Eligible Free. As of October 1st, enter the **number of applications** approved as **FREE Eligible** based on income/household size information submitted on an Application.”
 - **REDUCED-PRICE**: Report in “Reduced-Price Eligible – Income Eligible Reduced-Price. As of October 1st, enter the **number of applications** approved for **REDUCED-PRICE MEALS** based on income/household size information submitted on an Application.”

If the other children on the application are determined to be **ineligible** due to not meeting the income requirements, then the foster child must be reported in the following boxes:

- “Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Students.”
- “Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Applications.”

Since the other children on the application do not qualify for benefits, the application is tied to the foster child.

4. **Application includes BOTH a directly certified foster child(ren) AND income eligible students**

The foster child must be reported in:

- “Free Eligible – Exempt Free.”

Be sure to count the foster child only once in this box. If the foster child(ren) on the application has already been documented and accounted for as directly certified before

receiving the application, do not count again. Report the other students and the application in the appropriate free and reduced-price categories.

The income eligible student(s) AND the application must be reported in the appropriate free and reduced-price income eligible box:

- **Students:**
 - **FREE:** Report in “Free Eligible – Income Eligible Free. As of October 31st, enter the **number of students** approved as **FREE Eligible** based on income/household size information submitted on an Application.”
 - **REDUCED-PRICE:** Report in “Reduced-Price Eligible – Income Eligible Reduced-Price. As of October 31st, enter the **number of students** approved for **REDUCED-PRICE MEALS** based on income/household size information submitted on an Application.”
- **Applications:**
 - **FREE:** Report in “Free Eligible – Income Eligible Free. As of October 1st, enter the **number of applications** approved as **FREE Eligible** based on income/household size information submitted on an Application.”
 - **REDUCED-PRICE:** Report in “Reduced-Price Eligible – Income Eligible Reduced-Price. As of October 1st, enter the **number of applications** approved for **REDUCED-PRICE MEALS** based on income/household size information submitted on an Application.”

If the other children on the application with the foster child(ren) are determined to be **ineligible** due to not meeting the income requirements, then the foster child must be reported in:

- “Free Eligible – Exempt Free.”

The application is not reported and not subject to verification.

5. **Application includes BOTH a directly certified foster child(ren) and students that provide SNAP/TANF case number (categorically eligible)**

If not already accounted for, the directly certified foster child must be report in:

- “Free Eligible – Exempt Free.”

The categorically eligible student(s) AND application must be reported in:

- “Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Students”
- “Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Applications”

6. **Application includes BOTH a foster child(ren) not directly certified AND students that provide SNAP/TANF case number (categorically eligible)**

If a foster child(ren) is included on an application with categorically eligible non-foster child(ren) certified through a SNAP/TANF case number, **all** students in the household are categorically eligible. All students in the household and the application must be reported in:

- “Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Students”
- “Free Eligible – Categorically Eligible – Number of Applications”

Unacceptable Documentation

Tax forms are not considered acceptable proof of income except for households with irregular income (seasonal workers, self-employed persons, etc.). In these cases, tax forms may be used to project the amount of income the household expects to receive for the current year.

With regard to SNAP/TANF households, documentation that does not specify the certification period is not adequate proof of participation. For example, the SNAP identification card is not acceptable because it does not have an expiration date. The Lone Star Card is not proof of eligibility for SNAP benefits, as the card has no set expiration date.

Unresponsive Households and Follow-up

If the household does not respond to the verification request or submits insufficient or obsolete written evidence, school officials must contact the household to request the missing written evidence of current income and advise the household that failure to comply or designate a collateral contact will result in termination of benefits.

If a household is selected for regular verification or verification for cause and the application indicates zero income (zero income applications), the LEA must request an explanation of how living expenses are met and may request additional written documentation or collateral contacts. If the household does not adequately respond to the request for verification, the LEA follows the procedure for unresponsive households and follow-up.

When the LEA gives the household a second opportunity to respond to the verification notice, sufficient time must be allotted in the verification plan for the information to be submitted by the household and reviewed before the deadline of November 15th.

When households are given a second opportunity to respond, be sure to allow for this additional time in your verification plan.

If, after the second notice is sent, the household subsequently submits sufficient written evidence, then the verification requirement has been satisfied.

If the household still does not submit sufficient written evidence or fails to respond, terminate benefits on the date indicated on the notice of adverse action. Refer to the end of this section for

the prototype termination/reduction notice to be used when income eligibility was not confirmed. Also, refer to the end of this section for the notice to be used when participation in SNAP/TANF program(s) was not confirmed.

Defining Verification Completion

Verification of the required sample size must be completed by November 15th of each year. Verification of a household is considered to be complete when one of the following has been accomplished:

- When the income documentation or proof of SNAP/TANF participation received supports the household's previous level or higher level or eligibility;

OR

- If eligibility is not confirmed or if documentation is not received when the termination/reduction notice is sent to the household.

The date on which one of the above actions is completed for all households selected is considered the date on which verification is complete.

- Applications for cause. Once a household has been requested to provide documentation for cause, the LEA must complete the verification process for the application.

Once of the major reasons cited by LEAs for not completing verification by the November 15th deadline is the additional time needed to follow up with households that do not respond to the verification selection notice. The LEA does not have to wait indefinitely for households to respond in order to complete the verification process. The meal benefits of households that do not respond by the date specified in the second selection notice can be terminated 10 days after a termination notice is sent to such households. Verification would be considered complete for such households on the date the termination notice is sent.

The following additional steps of the verification process must be taken and may actually take place after the official completion date but are not considered in determining the completion date:

- Review any additional income or other documentation households provided after the due date.
- Terminate or reduce the meal benefits of affected households 10 calendar days after the date of the termination/reduction notice.
- Increase or reduce the meal benefits of households.

Verification Results

Verification of a household's income eligibility for free or reduced-price meals must result in one of the following:

- **No change in benefit level** - The household's current documentation supports the level of benefits for which the household has been approved.

- **Reduction in benefit level** – The household’s current documentation identifies income too high for the level of benefits for which the child has been approved. Therefore, the household’s eligibility must be changed from free to reduced-price, free to paid or reduced-price to paid. Changes in eligibility resulting in decreased benefit levels must be made in 10 calendar days.
- **Increase in benefit level** – The household’s current documentation qualifies the household for free meals rather than reduced-price meals. Therefore, the household’s eligibility must be changed from reduced-price to free meals. Changes in eligibility resulting in increased benefit levels are effective immediately but must be made in three calendar days. Parents should be notified through whatever channels the LEA uses to notify the household of approval for benefits.
- **Termination of benefits** – For households that do not respond to verification efforts or whose current documentation does not support eligibility for either free or reduced-price meals.

If verification results in a change in benefit level or termination, the change must be extended to all children in the household who were determined eligible by information that no longer supports the benefit level.

Notification of Adverse Action

When verification results in a reduction or termination of benefits, households must be sent a written notice prior to the changes in benefits. This notice must give households a 10-calendar-day notice before benefits are stopped. The first day of the 10-calendar-day period is the day the notice is sent. See the Prototype Letter of Adverse Action in this Section that incorporates the selection notice along with the 10-calendar-day notice of termination of benefits.

The notice must advise the household of the following:

1. The change in benefits.
2. The reason for the change.
3. That an appeal must be filed within the 10-calendar-day advance notice period to ensure continued benefits while awaiting a hearing and decision.
4. The instructions on how to appeal.
5. That the household may reapply for benefits at any time during the school year but will be subject to verification at the time of the second application, if terminated due to verification.
6. That SNAP/TANF households may submit an application containing household names and income information and provide written evidence of current household income.

When an advance notice of adverse action has been sent to a household, reimbursement can be claimed for that child during the period covered by the advance notice. The household must be given 10 calendar days advance notice that a change is being made in the child’s eligibility

status. During that time, the child must continue to receive free or reduced-price meal benefits, and the LEA may continue to claim reimbursement for free or reduced-price meals served to the child during this period.

Refer to the end of this section for examples of the termination/reduction notices that may be sent to households.

Benefits during Appeal of Verification Results

When a household appeals a reduction or termination of benefits within the 10-calendar-day advance notice period, the LEA must continue to provide the benefits for which the child was originally approved until a final determination is made.

When a household does not appeal a reduction or termination of benefits during the 10-calendar-day advance notice period, the actual reduction or termination of benefits must take place immediately after the 10-calendar-day advance notice period.

Hearing requirements are described in Section 2, Application Agreement/Renewal Section and in the LEA's policy statement.

Hearing Procedure

- The hearing procedure in the LEA's Policy Statement for Free and Reduced-Price Meals must be followed.
- The hearing official must be an individual who is not involved with the approval or verification process.
- The household may request a school conference prior to a formal hearing. Any such conference must not prejudice a later appeal.

Households that Reapply for Program Benefits

Households affected by a reduction or termination of benefits may reapply for benefits at any time during the school year. However, those households terminated as a result of verification efforts that reapply in the same school year must submit income documentation or proof of participation in the SNAP/TANF programs at the time of reapplication. The LEA must verify the households' income prior to approval. LEAs may elect to implement the policy for reapplications based on a reduction in benefits or from changes resulting from actions not related to verification.

Many students are terminated after the first 30 days of school because of failure to submit a new school year application however, income documentation is not required for those students since their eligibility is a carry-over from the previous year.

Reporting and Record Keeping Requirements

The LEA must maintain documentation to demonstrate compliance with the USDA verification requirements.

The *Verification Report* is required for the LEA to use to record information concerning each household selected for verification. The *Verification Report* is available in the Texas Unified Nutrition Programs System (TX-UNPS). LEAs not reporting their verification efforts via TX-UNPS can download a paper form of the *Verification Report* at www.squaremeals.org. LEAs submit the information to TDA by March 1 each year. Each application selected for verification, any supporting documentation and the *Verification Report* must be maintained in the LEA's records in case it is needed for an applicant's appeal or a Coordinated Review Effort review.

The *Verification Report* includes the following information:

- A description of the selection method(s) used.
- The total number of approved applications on file on October 1.
- The number and percentage of applications verified by November 15.
- The number of students on the applications verified and the number whose benefits changed.
- Documentation of the reasons for reduction or termination of benefits.

The *Verification Summary Worksheet* at the end of this section is an optional worksheet that the LEA can use to track their verification activities. The *Verification Record* at the end of this section is a required record that the LEA must use to track verification activities for each household.

Filing of Verified Applications

All verified applications must be readily retrievable by school and include:

- All documents submitted by the household in an effort to confirm eligibility, or
- Reproductions of those documents, or
- A written record of the documents submitted by the household including the type of document, e.g., wage stubs or letter from an employer, income shown on the document, time period of the income and the date of the document. If a household requests that documentation be returned, the LEA should comply with the request.

Letter to Households of Selection for Verification of Eligibility

(Student's Name) (School) (Date)

Dear _____:

This letter requires that you send information or contact _____ by _____.
(Official's Name) (Date)

Your child's application has been selected as part of a review to make sure only eligible students receive free or reduced-price meal benefits.

You must send either (1) papers that show that you get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly Food Stamps)/TANF for your child or (2) the names and papers that show your household's total monthly income.

We have enclosed information that shows the kinds of papers that you may use to prove that you now get SNAP benefits or TANF for your child or to show your household's income. If possible, do not send original papers. If you do send original documents, they will be sent back to you only if you ask.

If you do not send information that proves your child is eligible to receive free or reduced-price meal benefits by _____, these meal benefits will be stopped.
(Above Date)

If you have any questions, or if you need any help, please call: _____
at _____ (Name)
(Telephone Number)

If you do not hear from us by _____, free or reduced-price meals will continue without change.
(Date)

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Enclosures: Verification Information for Free and Reduced-Price Meals

In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (Voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Verification Information for Free and Reduced-Price Meals

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly Food Stamps)/TANF Households:

If you receive SNAP benefits or TANF for your child, send only the documentation that shows your household is now receiving SNAP/TANF. No other information is required. This is • SNAP/TANF certification notice showing the dates of the certification period; • Letter from the SNAP or TANF office stating that you now receive SNAP/TANF; • ATP Card (Authorization to participate).

Households that do not receive SNAP/TANF benefits: If you do not receive SNAP/TANF benefits for your child, write the name and send copies of information or papers that show your household's **current** income. Current income is the amount of money your household received for a complete month for any time between the month prior to the application through the time period the household is required to provide the documentation.

The papers you send in must show: the amount of the income received, the name of the person who received it, the date the income was received and how often the income is received. To show the amount of money your household received for one month, send copies of the following:

- **Earnings/wages/salary for each job:** current paycheck stubs that show how often it is received; current pay envelope that shows how often it is received; letter from employers stating gross wages and how often they are paid; business or farming papers, such as ledger or tax books.
- **Social Security/pensions/retirement:** Social Security retirement benefit letter; statement of benefits received; pension award notice.
- **Unemployment compensation/disability or worker's compensation:** notice of eligibility from State Employment Security Office; check stub; letter from Worker's Compensation.
- **Welfare payments (General Assistance):** benefit letter from welfare agency.
- **Child support/alimony:** court decree; agreement; copies of checks received.
- **All other income:** If you have other forms of income (such as rental income), send information or papers that show the amount of income received, how often it is received and the date received.
- **No income:** If you have no income, send a brief note explaining how you provide food, clothing and housing of your household and when you expect an income.

Please contact _____ if you have any questions.

In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (Voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Letter Household May Have Employer Complete – Statement of Earnings

This statement is to confirm that _____ received the following
(Name of Employee)

amount of gross income before deductions for taxes, social security insurance, etc. \$_____.

- weekly
- every two weeks
- twice a month
- monthly
- other _____

Please state the date of the paycheck listed above: _____.

Signature of Employer

Date

Address

Telephone Number

Note: Current income is the amount of money your household received for a complete month for any time between the month prior to the application through the time period the household is required to provide the documentation.

Letter Household May Have Social Security Office Complete- Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

This statement is to confirm that _____ received the following Social
(Name of Claimant)

Security \$ _____ or SSI income \$ _____ for the month of _____.

Signature of Official _____ Date _____

Address _____

Telephone Number _____

Letter Household May Have SNAP/TANF Office Complete – Statement of SNAP/TANF Benefits

(Name of Child)

(Name of Parent)

This statement is to confirm that the child named above is currently certified to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly Food Stamps) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits.

The household's case number is: _____.

Signature of SNAP/TANF Official

Date

Address

Telephone Number

Letter to the SNAP/TANF Office from the Local Education Agency

Date: _____

Dear _____:

The recipient of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly Food Stamps)/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) automatically qualifies children for free school meals. The regulations for SNAP and TANF permit SNAP and TANF Offices to release eligibility information to administrators of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to ensure that only eligible children receive free meal benefits.

Enclosed is a listing of approved free meal applicants who have been selected for verification and who have indicated that the child for whom an application was made now received SNAP and/or TANF benefits. On the enclosed listing, please indicate if these household members are currently participating in the SNAP and/or TANF Program. This information will be used only to confirm the approved applicant's eligibility for free meal benefits.

Your return of the listing by _____ will be appreciated. A self-addressed return envelope is also enclosed for your convenience. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact _____ at telephone number _____.

Sincerely,

Signature

Date

Address

Telephone Number

Enclosure (Verification Form – SNAP/TANF Recipients)

Letter of Verification Results and Adverse Action for Income Households

(Note: Make changes as applicable for the School Breakfast Program)

Child(ren)'s Name(s): _____

School: _____ Date: _____

Dear _____:

We have completed verification of your child(ren)'s eligibility for school meals.

Starting on (10 calendar days from the date sent) your child(ren)'s eligibility for meal benefits will be:

Changed from free to reduced-price because your income is over the allowable amount. The reduced-price charge is _____ cents for lunch, _____ cents for breakfast, and _____ cents for snacks.

Stopped for the following reason(s):

_____ Your income is over the allowable amount for free or reduced-price meals;

_____ You did not provide proof of current eligibility. The following information is missing:

Starting immediately your child(ren)'s eligibility for meal benefits will be:

Changed from reduced-price to free because your income is within the free meal eligibility limits. Your child(ren) will receive meals at no cost.

If you are not eligible for benefits now but have a decrease in household income, become unemployed or have an increase in the size of your household, you may fill out an application at that time to really for benefits.

If you do not agree with this decision you may discuss it with: _____ (verifying official). You also have the right to a fair hearing. If you request a hearing by 10 calendar days from the date sent, your child(ren) will continue to receive free or reduced-price meals until the decision of the hearing official is made. You may request a fair hearing by calling or writing the following official:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Sincerely,

In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (Voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Letter of Adverse Action for SNAP/TANF Households

Date: _____

Dear _____:

We have completed verification of your child(ren)'s eligibility for school meals. Available records show that your household is not getting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly Food Stamps)/TANF benefits at this time.

To continue school meal benefits for your child:

- 1) Complete a new application with income information;
- 2) Send in papers that show your household's current income.

Your child's free school meal benefits will be stopped on (insert 10 calendar days from the above date) unless we receive this information. Any continued free or reduced-price meals will depend on your current household income. If you do not agree with the decision, you may discuss it with (verifying official) by calling (telephone number).

You also have the right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing the following official:

Name: *(insert hearing official's information)*

Address:

Telephone Number:

If you request a hearing by (insert 10 calendar days from the date sent), your child will continue to receive free meals until the hearing official's decision is made.

If you are not eligible for benefits now but your household circumstances change, you may fill out an application at that time and reapply for benefits.

Very truly yours,

(Insert verification official's name)

Enclosures: Free and Reduced-Price Application; Verification Information for Free and Reduced-Price Meals

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Notification of Continuation of Benefits as a Result of Verification (Optional)

Date: _____

Dear _____:

Thank you for cooperating with the _____ in its verification
(Name of LEA)
of eligibility for school meal benefits. The materials you have sent are sufficient for us to verify that your child is eligible for the meal benefits he or she is receiving.

We appreciate your cooperation and support during this process. If you have any questions concerning our program, please feel free to contact our office.

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Verification Record

Household Name:

Total Number of Household Members:

Total Number of Enrolled Students:

Date Selected:

Response Due:

Second Notice Sent:

Date Reduction/Termination Notice Sent:

Selection Method:

- Basic (Error Prone)
- Alternate Method 1
- Alternate Method 2
- Other: _____

SNAP/TANF Household

Confirmed

- SNAP/TANF Office
- Notice of Eligibility
- ATP Card
- Other: _____

Income Household

Monthly Income: \$ _____

- Wage Stubs (Gross Monthly Income)
- Written Documents
- Collateral Contacts
- Agency Records
- Other: _____

Not Confirmed

- Eligibility Not Confirmed

Verification Results

- No Change
- Reduced-Price to Free
- Free to Reduced-Price
- Paid

Reason for Change

- High Income
- No Response
- SNAP/TANF Eligibility Not Confirmed
- Other

Signature

Date