

Section 4100

Participant Enrollment and Eligibility at Independent and Sponsored Centers

Log of Section Updates

This table will reflect updates to the handbook implemented during the current Program Year. All substantive updates made since the last release will be highlighted in yellow within this section.

Date of Edit	Content/Purpose	Subsection(s)
March 2026	Consolidated content from all four previous handbooks.	General
	Reorganized, rewrote, and/or reformatted information throughout the section for clarity, providing more details around emergency shelters and outside-school-hours care centers.	
	Reinforced guidance allowing electronic signatures on forms	4111
	Updated Texas DPS admission form reference (for collecting enrollment information) to “Texas Health and Human Services Form 2935 Admission Information – Centers”	
	Added maximum allowed meal prices for reduced-price meals.	4131.1
	Added more details about the information that sponsors must provide households when seeking eligibility information for enrolled children.	4132
	Clarified that households that do not provide eligibility information cannot be denied participation in a program or the meals served at that program.	4132
	Added that Head Start sites or sites with Head Start-enrolled children must validate participation annually if using Head Start participation to establish categorical eligibility	4134.4
	Clarified that an eligibility determination can be retroactive to the first of the month and provided more examples of how the effective month can be determined.	4136

March 2026	Added household eligibility notification responsibilities for sites operating a pricing program	4137
	Added TDA's verification responsibilities for reviewing participant eligibility information	4138

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Participant Enrollment and Eligibility at Independent and Sponsored Centers

NOTE: Day care home sponsors can find information on enrollment and eligibility determinations for day care home participants in Section 4200. This section applies only to CACFP participants at child care centers, adult day care centers, at-risk sites, outside-school-hours care centers (OSHCCs), and emergency shelters.

For contracting entities (CEs) to receive CACFP reimbursement, they must ensure that meals and snacks are served to eligible participants and claimed based on the eligibility classification of the participant. Sites that enroll participants (pre-defined enrollment) must ensure that meals claimed for reimbursement were served to enrolled participants; these sites must maintain and annually update documentation of enrollment (as applicable by site type) and eligibility for each participant as described in this section.

4110 Participant Enrollment at Child Care and Adult Day Care Centers

Traditional child care centers and adult day care centers must collect enrollment information from all participants and/or their parents or guardians each year.¹ Sites must maintain proof of proper enrollment for all participants receiving reimbursable meals.

Sites **must not** claim meals for participants with incomplete or missing enrollment documentation. TDA will review enrollment documentation during an Administrative Review to ensure that meals claimed were served to enrolled participants.

4111 Required Enrollment Information

Parents, guardians, or adult participants (or their representatives) must complete, submit, and then sign enrollment documentation. Sites must provide enrollment forms, or an alternative, that allow for parents, guardians, or adult participants (or their representatives) to indicate or enter the following information:

- Participant's name
- Participant's date of birth
- For adult day cares, the participant's age
- Enrollment and withdrawal dates
 - The withdrawal date field must only be completed when the participant withdraws from the site/center
- Signatures of:

¹ Emergency shelters are not required to enroll participants. At-risk sites and outside-school-hours care centers may enroll children but are not required to do so. For these site types that do enroll children, CEs can find more information on enrollment records, rosters, and/or daily attendance for these program types in *Enrollment and Attendance at At-Risk Sites, Emergency Shelters, and Outside-School-Hours Care Centers*.

- For child care centers, the child’s parent or guardian
- For adult day cares, the adult participant or participant’s representative
- Date of signature

Sites may collect enrollment information electronically if they have the means **to capture an electronic signature** or can print the completed document(s) for the required signature. A site representative may input required information as it is provided by a parent, guardian, or adult participant (or representative) into a computer, but in that case, the site representative must have a means of providing the enrollment documentation to the parent, guardian, or adult participant for review and obtaining that individual’s required signature.

After the parent, guardian, or adult participant (or their representative) has signed the enrollment documentation, sites must not complete or alter the information.

Sites may use the **Texas Health and Human Services Form 2935 Admission Information – Centers**,² which typically contains all required enrollment information. However, sponsors are responsible for ensuring that whichever form their sites use includes all the necessary enrollment elements described in this section.

4112 Additional Traditional Child Care Center Enrollment Requirements

On the child care center enrollment documentation, sites must provide a space for parents or guardians to indicate or enter the following information:

- Meals and/or snacks normally served to the child while in care
- Normal days and hours of care for the child

Parents or guardians must provide this information for their child(ren). Therefore, while sites may *include* their operational days, hours, or offered meals in enrollment documentation, they *must* collect the required information for each child. Sites may not pre-populate this information in documentation.

EXCEPTION for Head Start Programs: Head Start Programs may include pre-defined session days, times, and meals in enrollment documentation or an alternative. If so, this documentation is acceptable. It must be readily available to parents/guardians as well as TDA, USDA, and their representatives.

² <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/regulations/forms/2000-2999/form-2935-admission-information>

Sites can collect this information using the example(s) below.

Example 1: *For traditional child care centers*

Meals/snacks normally served to my child while in care (circle all that apply): Breakfast AM Snack Lunch PM Snack Supper Evening Snack
Days and hours my child is normally in care: Days (circle all that apply): M T W TH F Hours: _____ am to _____ pm

Example 2: *For Head Start Programs*

Session my child will attend and meals my child will receive:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Session 1 Mon – Fri 8 am – 12 pm (Breakfast, am snack, lunch)	<input type="checkbox"/> Session 2 Mon – Fri 12 pm – 3 pm (Lunch, pm snack)

4113 Annual Updates to Enrollment Information

Annually (i.e., every 12 months), sites **must** ask parents, guardians, and adult participants (or their representatives) to review enrollment information, make necessary changes, and provide a signature and date.

To fulfill this requirement, sites must:

- Provide previous enrollment documentation for parents, guardians, or adult participants (or their representatives) to review all information, indicate changes, sign, and date again, OR
- Have parents, guardians, or adult participants (or their representatives) complete entirely new enrollment forms, providing all required information.

Sites may **not** provide and accept **only** an attestation form stating that no information has changed; all enrollment documentation must be reviewed by parents, guardians, or adult participants before any such attestation will be accepted.

4120 Enrollment and Attendance at At-Risk Sites, Emergency Shelters, and Outside-School-Hours Care Centers

4121 At-Risk Site and Outside-School-Hours Care Center Attendance and Enrollment

At-risk afterschool sites and OSHCCs may claim reimbursement for meals and snacks served to participants meeting the participant eligibility criteria in Section 2000 *Eligibility and Application Requirements*. Enrollment documentation is not required for At-risk sites and OSHCCs that provide drop-in services and do not have a predefined enrollment process. These sites, however, **must** maintain a daily attendance log or roster of children attending their respective programs for each day of service. **The roster/attendance must capture the child's name and age.**

Children in attendance receiving meals are not required to participate in the scheduled activities in order to receive a meal. Additionally, the attendance log should capture any child who attends on that day, regardless of whether he or she received a meal. Sites can use the applicable *Daily Meal Count and Attendance Record* (H1535-AT for At-risk, H1535 for OSHCC) or a comparable alternative to capture required attendance information.

For sites with pre-defined enrollment: Sites with pre-defined enrollment must retain all enrollment records and make them available to TDA for claim validations and inspection(s) during reviews, audits, or other official visits.

4122 Emergency Shelter Enrollment and Participant Eligibility

Instead of enrollment documentation, emergency shelters must maintain a roster of children residing in the shelter. The roster must detail each child's name, arrival and withdrawal date, age, and parent or guardian's name.

4130 Eligibility for Free or Reduced Price Meals

NOTE: Emergency shelters and At-risk sites **are not required** to determine participant eligibility for free or reduced-price meals/snacks. Therefore, this section does not apply to these program types.

Child care centers, outside-school-hours care centers, and adult day care centers must determine each participant's eligibility for free, reduced-price, or paid meals. Centers are reimbursed per meal based on this eligibility classification.³ This information must be requested and updated every year.

Participants are classified based on:

- Categorical eligibility, based on participation in another income-based federal program or if classified as homeless or a foster child; or

³ While both pricing and non-pricing programs must accurately classify the eligibility of their participants for meal claiming purposes, note that non-pricing programs must not separately charge participants for meals served. Refer to *Pricing and Non-Pricing Programs* in this section.

- Household income eligibility, based on federally determined income thresholds

4131 Pricing and Non-Pricing Programs

Child care centers, outside-school-hours care centers, and adult day cares that must determine eligibility of each participant operate one of two program types depending on their charging policies.

4131.1 Pricing Programs

Sites operating a pricing program charge separately for participants' meals as follows:

- Participants eligible for free meals must not be charged.
- Participants eligible for reduced-price meals must not be charged more than the maximum allowed per meal type:
 - Breakfast – 30 cents
 - Lunch – 40 cents
 - Snack – 15 cents

Sites operating pricing programs may not use Program revenue (for example, CACFP reimbursement or payments received from reduced-price participants) to subsidize meal costs for non-program or paid-category participants. Sites must also determine a process for collecting meal charges without overtly identifying participants' eligibility.

CEs charging separately for meals must complete the *Free and Reduced-Price Meal Policy Statement* (H4515)⁴ and maintain this document on file for review during an Administrative Review.

4131.2 Non-Pricing Programs

Sites operating a non-pricing program charge a general tuition fee that includes participants' meal costs. Sites operating non-pricing programs may not separately charge participants for meals regardless of their eligibility.

Upon application to the Program, the sponsor or independent CE representative(s) must accept responsibility for and attest that its sites:

- Will not physically segregate nor discriminate against any person receiving free or reduced-price meal benefits and will protect these individuals' anonymity; and
- Will serve the same meals or snacks to all Program participants at no separate charge, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, with no discrimination during the food service.

By agreeing to this statement, the CE assures TDA it will uniformly implement this free and reduced-price policy across all CACFP sites under its jurisdiction.

⁴ Located on the CACFP Administration/Forms page of SquareMeals.org.

4132 Obtaining Eligibility Information from Households

Every year (i.e., every 12 months), sites **must request** participant households to report participation in qualifying programs and/or household income by providing the following documentation:

- *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form Letter to Households* (TDA provides separate template letters for pricing and non-pricing child care centers and adult day care centers on SquareMeals.org)
- *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form*
- *Income Eligibility Guidelines for Determining Free/Reduced-Price Benefits (H1625-A)*

The letter to the household must include:

- General Program information.
- Explanation of how households with incomes at or below the levels listed on the *Income Eligibility Guidelines for Determining Free or Reduced-Price Benefits (H1625-A)* are eligible for CACFP benefits.⁵
- How a participant's household's completion of the *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* will determine participant eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits. Note that non-pricing sites should inform households that while the participants' meals are included in the price of tuition, completion of the form may result in the site receiving higher reimbursement for the meals served to the participant.
- An explanation that an application for free or reduced-price benefits cannot be approved unless it contains complete documentation as described in the letter.
- Instructions on reporting income and household information.
- Information and instructions on how a participant can be considered categorically eligible for benefits.
- A statement that once properly approved for free or reduced-price benefits, the qualifying participants will remain eligible for those benefits for 12 months.
- The statement: "In the operation of child feeding programs, no person will be discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability."
- A statement noting that a participant may become eligible for benefits if a household member becomes unemployed, provided that the loss of income causes the household income during the period of unemployment to be within the eligibility standards for those meals.
- **For pricing programs,**
 - Notice that information in the application may be verified at any time during the year; and
 - Instructions on how a family may appeal a decision of the institution to deny, reduce, or terminate benefits.

⁵ To align with federal requirements, *Form H1625A* only contains the income eligibility guidelines that would qualify a household for reduced-price meals.

For children’s eligibility, child care centers may also request information from other CEs (such as School Food Authorities) on a need-to-know basis (see *Sharing Eligibility Information*).

NOTE: Parents/guardians or adult participants (or their representatives) are not required to submit any eligibility determination information as a condition of enrollment or to receive a meal. Participants for whom eligibility information cannot be obtained must be classified as “paid.”

4133 CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form

Sites receiving completed *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* from households must verify:

- Names of enrolled participant(s) and all household members
- Signatures of an adult household member or representative (for adult day care)
- Date of signature
- If households complete the *Total Household Gross Income* section of the form, then verify:
 - The signing adult household member has provided the last four digits of their social security number, *or*
 - That the box “I do not have a Social Security Number” is checked.

A determining official from the CE or site will determine if a participant is eligible for free or reduced-price benefits based on one of the following:

- Categorical eligibility (See *Categorical Eligibility*) or
- Household size and income information (See *Income Eligibility*)

The determining official must sign and date the *CACFP Meal Benefit and Income Eligibility Form*, acknowledging their receipt, review, and completion.

The signature dates of either the determining official or the adult household member will be used to determine the effective month of eligibility. See *Eligibility Effective Date and Determination Duration*.

If an adult participant needs assistance, a representative can complete the *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* (Adult Care) on their behalf. If participants cannot sign the application, the participant must enter an “X” as their signature. A representative must witness this signature. The last four digits of the participant’s social security number of the applicant or adult household member must be included in the space provided. The representative must sign and date the form as required.

NOTE: The representative's social security number is not required. The last four digits of the social security number of the participant or adult household member must be included in the space provided.

4134 Categorical Eligibility

In most cases, sites can determine *categorical eligibility* of participants if parents, guardians, or adult participants (or their representatives) report participation in the qualifying programs outlined in this section.

4134.1 Qualifying Programs/Benefits

Participants and their households are categorically eligible for free meals if they receive one of the following federal or state financial assistance *and* complete the *Benefits* section of the *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* with the required information listed below.

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - TANF Number –
 - a nine-digit Eligibility Determination Group (EDG) number beginning with any number “0 - 9” or
 - an eight-digit EDG number beginning with any number “1-9”, but not a zero
- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - SNAP number –
 - a nine-digit EDG number beginning with any number “0 - 9” or
 - an eight-digit EDG number beginning with any number “1-9” (i.e., not 0)
- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservation (FDPIR)
 - FDPIR case number
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (Adult Day Care participant only)
 - Participant’s complete social security number
- Medicaid (including STAR+PLUS participants) (Adult Day Care participant only)
 - Medicaid case number

NOTES:

- Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) or Lone Star Card account numbers are not acceptable SNAP numbers. If provided, sites must contact the applicant for the valid SNAP or TANF eligibility number.
- Award letter copies (Form H1009) are not acceptable eligibility documentation.

4134.2 Foster Children

Foster children formally placed by the State or a court are categorically eligible for free meals. Sites must obtain the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Form 2085FC, Placement Authorization Foster Care/Residential Care from the household to validate eligibility.

NOTES:

- Verified foster children do not need further application forms or proof of eligibility to receive free meals.
- If Form 2085FC is unavailable, the household may complete a *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* for the foster child/children.

Households with both foster and non-foster children may include the foster child/children as household members, as well as any personal income earned by the foster child/children, on the same *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* that includes non-foster children, if the addition of the foster child/children as household members helps the household qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

Categorical eligibility for free meals for the foster child/children does not convey eligibility for free meals to the other non-foster children in the household. Sites must make a determination of free or reduced-price eligibility for the remainder of the household based on the household's income, whether or not that includes income from foster children.

4134.3 Homeless Participants

Participants designated as homeless are categorically eligible for free meals. Sites can get verification of a participant's homeless status from the:

- School district homeless coordinator;
- Homeless liaison (in cases where a liaison assisted a homeless participant in moving in with another household);
- Application from the Health and Human Services Commission with case number showing receipt of Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP); or
- Adult member in the temporary household (including an adult CACFP participant enrolled at an Adult Day Care)
 - The adult would complete the *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* and designate the participant as "homeless."

Categorical eligibility for free meals for the homeless child/children does not convey eligibility for free meals to the other non-homeless children in the household. Sites must make a determination of free or reduced-price eligibility for the remainder of the household based on the household's income or participation in a qualifying program. However, families hosting children or displaced families can include the displaced family members and any income they receive when applying for free or reduced-price benefits.

Participants determined eligible for free meals as a result of a disaster, whether through homeless status or D-SNAP receipt, remain eligible for the entire eligibility period (see *Eligibility Effective Date and Determination Duration* below).

4134.4 Head Start and Early Head Start Programs

Children enrolled in a Head Start Program (HSP) or Early Head Start Program (EHSP) are categorically eligible for free meals, although this categorical eligibility does not automatically extend to other household children not enrolled in these programs.

CACFP Centers Operating Head Start or Early Head Start Programs

For all children who participate in a center's HSP or EHSP, the center must maintain enrollment documentation in order to claim reimbursement for the meals that are served to them. All children properly enrolled in the HSP or EHSP are categorically eligible for free meals, and the CE or site does not need to verify income.

Centers Not Operating Head Start or Early Head Start Programs

If a child participates in an HSP or EHSP at a different location, the participating site must obtain documentation certifying enrollment in the HSP or EHSP from the parent/guardian of the child in order to claim the child in the free category. The certification must be signed and dated by an authorized HSP or EHSP employee.

All children properly enrolled in an HSP or EHSP, and for whom the site has obtained a statement of certification, are categorically eligible for free meals, and the site does not need to verify income. Refer to *Section 11000, Resources*, for a sample statement of Certification.

Annually, the site must review categorical eligibility through HSP or EHSP participation by obtaining new certification statement from the parents/guardians.

4134.5 Even Start Family Literacy Program

A child who is enrolled as a participant in an Even Start Family Literacy Program (ESP) and who has not yet entered kindergarten is automatically eligible for free meals, although this categorical eligibility does not automatically extend to other household children not enrolled in these programs.

ESP-operating sites must retain an approved ESP application or a statement of enrollment in the program, along with documentation confirming the child is not yet enrolled in kindergarten.

For sites not operating an ESP, parents/guardians must provide a statement certifying that the child is an ESP participant and has not yet entered kindergarten. The certification must be signed and dated by an authorized ESP employee.

NOTE: Sites are not required to obtain the *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* for any child for whom they have this documentation.

Annually, centers must review categorical eligibility through ESP participation by ensuring a current ESP application is on file or by obtaining a new certification statement from the parents/guardians that the child is still enrolled in ESP and not yet enrolled in kindergarten. For any child who loses categorical eligibility, the site must provide the household the opportunity to complete a *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form*.

4135 Income Eligibility

If categorical eligibility cannot be determined, or for households with participants that are **no longer** categorically eligible for the current Program Year, sites must evaluate whether participants are income-eligible for free or reduced-price meals using household size and income standards on SquareMeals.org.⁶

To determine income eligibility, sites must verify current income and sources of each household member, including any income earned from children enrolled for child care.

If income is received at different frequencies (e.g., one member receives weekly income, another monthly), use these calculations to obtain annual income for eligibility determinations:

- Multiply monthly income by 12
- Multiply bi-weekly income by 26
- Multiply weekly income by 52
- Multiply bi-monthly income by 24

NOTE: Do not round the result.

4135.1 Excluded Income

Sites **must not** include the following from income when determining income eligibility:

Excluded Income from Federal Programs	
Category	Description
SNAP, WIC, Child Nutrition Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The value of assistance to children and their families under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA), the Child Nutrition Act (CNA) of 1966, and the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008.
Housing assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reimbursements from the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970.• Payments received under the Cranston-Gonzales National Affordable Housing Act, P.L. 101-625.• Payments received under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987.

⁶ TDA annually posts updated income eligibility standards before July 1 here: <https://squaremeals.org/FandN-Resources/Income-Eligibility-Guidelines>

Volunteer payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any payment to volunteers under title I (VISTA and others) and title II (RSVP, foster grandparents, and others) of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 to the extent excluded by the Act. • Payments to volunteers under section 8(b)(1)(B) of the Small Business Act (SCORE and ACE). • Payments and allowances to individuals participating in AmeriCorps to the extent excluded by the National and Community Service Act of 1990.
Child care assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value of any child care provided or arranged, or any payment or reimbursement for costs incurred for such care, under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, as amended by section 8(b) of P.L. 102-586, 106 Stat. 5035. • Value of any “at-risk” block grant child care payments made under section 5081 of P.L. 101-508, which amended section 402 of the Social Security Act.
Old age assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments received under the Old Age Assistance Claims Settlement Act, except for per capita shares over \$2,000.
Student financial aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student financial assistance received under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, including the Pell Grant, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant, State Student Incentive Grants, National Direct Student Loan, PLUS, College Work Study, and Byrd Honor Scholarship Programs, to the extent excluded by the Act. • Payments received under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, as amended by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act Amendments of 1990, P.L. 101-392.
Disaster assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) payments received by property owners. • Payments under the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, as amended by the Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Amendments of 1989, P.L. 100-707.
Utility assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments under the Low-income Home Energy Assistance Act, P.L. 99-125.
Military compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments under the Agent Orange Compensation Exclusion Act, P.L. 101-201. • Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veteran’s Educational Assistance Act of 1964 (GI Bill). • Privatized housing allowances to service members living in housing covered under the Military Housing Privatization Initiative. (See: Department of Defense (DOD) Military Housing Privatization, http://www.acq.osd.mil/housing/)
Combat pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment Extension Incentive Pay (DEIP), which is given to active-duty service members who agree to extend their military service by completing deployment with their units without re-enlisting. This exemption applies only until the service members return to their home station. DEIP payments provided to service members who are not considered deployed are not exempt. • Also exclude combat pay when it is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Received in addition to the service member’s basic pay, ○ Received as a result of deployment to or service in an area that has been designated as a combat zone, <u>and</u> ○ Not received by the service member before deployment to or service in the designated combat zone.
Land payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income derived from certain sub-marginal land of the U.S. that is held in trust for certain Indian tribes.
Institutionalized child’s income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments from any source directly received by a Residential Child Care Institution (RCCI) or institution on a child’s behalf are not considered as income to the child.
Lump sum payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lump sum payments or large cash settlements are not counted as income since they are not received on a regular basis. These funds may be provided as compensation for a loss that must be replaced, such as payment from an insurance company for fire damage to a house. • NOTE: When lump sum payments are put into a savings account and the household regularly draws from that account for living expenses, the amount withdrawn is counted as income.
In-kind benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-kind benefits (housing for clergy, cars for salespersons, employee medical or dental benefits, etc.) are not cash payments and, therefore, are not considered as income for the purpose of determining free and reduced price eligibility. School officials are not in a position to determine the value of in-kind benefits.

Other Excluded Income

- Credits received from Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).
- Payments received from a foster care agency or court for the care of foster children.
- Loans, such as bank loans, since these funds are only temporarily available and must be repaid.
- Infrequent earnings received on an irregular basis, such as payment for occasional babysitting or yard work.

NOTE: This list is not all-inclusive, as legislation may exclude additional income types. Sites should periodically check the Appendix to *Subpart K of Part 416 – List of Types of Income Excluded under the SSI Program as Provided by Federal Laws Other Than the Social Security Act*: http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OP_Home/cfr20/416/416-app-k.htm

4135.2 Deployed Military Members

Determining Household Size

When determining household size, sites should consider deployed service members as household members, whether they are deployed temporarily or for an extended period. For children staying at a temporary residence while both parents/guardians are deployed, count these children as part of the temporary household with whom they are residing, and also include the deployed parents or guardians in the host household's count.

Determining Household Income

When determining household income, sites should count only the portion of a deployed service member's income that is made available to the household.

Sites should instruct households to include deployed service members' names and the portion of their income available to the household on the *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* (Child Care or Adult Care).

When determining income eligibility for military families, sites:

Include the following in calculations:

- Base pay
- Regular housing allowance
- Subsistence
- Clothing allowance
- Hazardous duty
- Hostile fire
- Flight pay

- Incentive pay

Do not include any income sources listed in *Excluded Income* above.

4136 Eligibility Effective Date and Determination Duration

Sites may choose one of two methods to determine free or reduced-price eligibility duration. The **effective month** of the determination is determined by one of the following:

- Signature date of the *determining official* or
- Signature date of the
 - *Parent or guardian* (child care center) or
 - *Participant or participant’s representative* (adult day care center)

Sites must select one method for *all* eligibility determinations and document this decision in their eligibility determination processes.

IMPORTANT: If the parent/guardian/participant signature *is not within the same month or the month before* the determining official’s signature, the site *must* use the determining official’s signature date to assess validity.

The effective date of a participant’s eligibility may be adjusted to the first of the month in which the eligibility determination is made. Eligibility is current and valid for one year, through the last day of the month in which the determination was made one year prior.

EXAMPLE: If a child care center is using the date of parent signature to determine eligibility, a meal benefit income eligibility form signed and dated by a parent in February 2026, but certified by a sponsor in March, would be valid effective February 1, 2026, until February 28, 2027.

However, if the form signed in February was received and certified in April, meaning there was a delay in either submitting or certifying the form through the entire month of March, the form is valid effective April 1, 2026, through April 30, 2027. Because the date of the parent’s signature is not within the month of certification or the immediately preceding month, the effective date must be the date of certification.

During the eligibility period, households are not required to report changes impacting eligibility (e.g., income increases, household size decreases, loss of eligibility for SNAP, TANF, FDPIR).

4137 Notification of Eligibility (Pricing Programs Only)

Sites operating pricing programs must provide written notice to each household informing it of the results of the eligibility determinations.⁷ When the information furnished by the household is not complete or does not meet the eligibility criteria for free or reduced-price meals, the site must document the participants as eligible for “paid” meals. When a household is denied free or reduced-price benefits, the notice must include:

⁷ TDA provides *Form H1663, Letter of Determination – Pricing Programs* on the CACFP Administration/Forms page of SquareMeals.org that sites may use as a template.

- The reason for the denial of benefits (for example, income in excess of allowable limits or incomplete application);
- Notification of the right to appeal;
- Instructions on how to appeal; and
- A statement reminding the household that they may reapply for free or reduced-price benefits at any time during the year,

The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file at the institution.

4138 Verification of Eligibility Data

During an Administrative Review, TDA will review the CE's approved *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Forms* and/or any other documentation on file establishing participants' free or reduced-price benefits. TDA will determine the following:

- The application has been correctly and completely executed by the household;
- The site has correctly determined and classified the eligibility of enrolled participants for free or reduced price meals; and
- The CE has accurately reported to TDA the number of enrolled participants meeting the criteria for free or reduced-price meal eligibility.

For all pricing programs,⁸ TDA will conduct verification of the income information provided on a random sample of at least 3 percent of the approved free and reduced-price applications processed by the site. However:

- If a SNAP, FDPIR, or TANF case number is provided for a child, verification must include only confirmation that the child is included in a currently certified SNAP or FDPIR household or is a TANF recipient; or
- If a SNAP or FDPIR case number or SSI or Medicaid assistance identification number is provided for an adult, verification must include only confirmation that the adult is included in a currently certified SNAP or FDPIR household or is currently certified to receive SSI or Medicaid benefits.

TDA will inform households selected for additional verification in writing that they are required to submit the requested verification information to confirm their eligibility for free or reduced-price benefits by the date determined by TDA. Selected households will be informed of the type or types of information and/or documents acceptable and the name and phone number of an official who can answer questions and assist the household in the verification effort.

If a household refuses to cooperate with efforts to verify, or the verification of income indicates that the household is ineligible to receive benefits or must have benefits reduced, TDA will require the pricing program site to terminate or adjust eligibility and notify households of the denial/adjustment of benefits 10 calendar days prior to the denial/adjustment. The 10-day period shall begin the day the notice is transmitted to the family. The notice shall advise the household of:

⁸ If necessary, TDA may conduct further verification of households participating in **non-pricing programs** in accordance with this section.

- The change;
- The reasons for the change;
- Notification of the right to appeal the action and the date by which the appeal must be requested in order to avoid a reduction or termination of benefits;
- Instructions on how to appeal; and
- The right to reapply at any time during the year. The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file at the institution.

Households that have been approved for benefits and are subject to a reduction or termination of benefits later in the same year must continue to receive benefits while waiting for the hearing if they appealed the adverse action within the 10-day advance notice period.

4138.1 Actions Resulting from Verification

If verification results disclose that a site has inaccurately classified or reported the number of participants eligible for free, reduced-price, or paid meals, TDA will adjust the CE's rates of reimbursement retroactive to the month in which the incorrect eligibility figures were reported by the CE to TDA.

If the verification results indicate that a household has not provided accurate documentation on the application to support continued eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, TDA will adjust the CE rates of reimbursement. However, the adjustment will not take effect until the affected households have been notified and any ensuing appeals have been heard.

4140 Documentation Required for Claiming

Sites with pre-defined enrollment must maintain and annually update enrollment counts and eligibility information. Claims for reimbursement should reflect these accurate and updated numbers.

Claims for reimbursement should reflect annually updated enrollment counts and eligibility information. While sites with pre-defined enrollment may use the *CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form* to document some required enrollment information, they must capture and maintain all other required information as required in *Participant Enrollment at Child Care and Adult Day Care Centers* above. Sites that fail to maintain and annually update enrollment and eligibility documentation will be non-compliant with Program requirements.

The table below details how missing or incomplete enrollment or eligibility information can impact the CE/site's claims for reimbursement.

For each participant:

If the CE or site has:	Then:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Complete</u> eligibility information and/or <i>CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form</i> • <u>Incomplete</u> enrollment information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant must be counted in the enrollment count <i>and</i> eligibility mix (i.e., free, reduced price, or paid).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant’s meals must not be claimed until all required enrollment information is received.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Incomplete</u> eligibility information and/or <i>CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form</i> <u>Complete</u> enrollment information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant must be counted in the enrollment count <i>and</i> eligibility mix <u>in the paid category</u>. The participant’s meals may be claimed in the paid category.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Incomplete</u> enrollment information <u>Incomplete</u> eligibility information and/or <i>CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Form</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant must not be counted in the enrollment count and eligibility mix. The participant’s meals must not be claimed.

All enrollment and eligibility documentation must be available for review by TDA, USDA, and their respective representatives.

4150 Confidentiality

Personal data privacy and confidentiality must be protected. Sites must:

- Ensure staff receiving eligibility information (from households or other CEs) understand they cannot share it with any other entity.
- Securely store information and limit access to essential personnel.
- Not release information containing participant names or other individual information (except as outlined in *Sharing Eligibility Information* below).

CEs/sites may release summary information, such as the number of participants eligible for benefits, *except* when disclosure would allow participant identification.

4151 Sharing Eligibility Information

CEs operating other Child Nutrition Programs (CNP), such as School Food Authorities (SFAs) operating National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program (NSLP/SBP) **may** disclose children’s names and eligibility information, including eligibility status, to **persons directly connected** with administering other Federal Child Nutrition Programs authorized under the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, which includes CACFP. For example, a child care center that also enrolls school-age children may use eligibility data maintained for those children by an NSLP-participating school to qualify children for CACFP benefits.

NOTES:

- CEs *are not required by law* to disclose information to another CE.

- CEs *are not required* to give prior notice or receive household consent before sharing information; therefore, the information is subject to the same confidentiality and disclosure requirements as information obtained directly from households.

“**Persons directly connected**” with administering another Child Nutrition Program include:

- Organizations participating in CACFP
- Individuals who legitimately “need to know” eligibility information to carry out program responsibilities

NOTE: Not all CE/site employees are entitled to eligibility information. The CE providing information must ensure the requester has a genuine “need to know” before sharing.

EXAMPLE: The individual responsible for documenting the eligibility of a child would have a clear “need to know”, while an individual serving meals or conducting recreation programs would not.

CEs/sites either requesting information from or providing information to another CE must:

- Document that the eligibility information applies to the specific child in question; and
 - Share the minimum amount of information to identify the child.
 - In some cases, share additional information to ensure the determination applies to the specific child.

EXAMPLE: A CE documenting income eligibility for child “John Smith” may need to provide the child’s date of birth so the CNP can verify the information applies to the correct “John Smith”.

- Verify the source/validity of the information.

EXAMPLE: Document CNP name, person providing information, date obtained, and the child care center person who obtained the information.

CEs/sites may document eligibility information shared in writing (preferred) or verbally. Both are sufficient to verify information.

CEs/sites may use TDA’s *Shared Eligibility Form* (at <https://www.squaremeals.org> → CACFP Administration and Forms) or their own version to document shared eligibility. CEs/sites can provide the form to the other CE for completion or complete it themselves based on verbal information received.

CEs/sites must document the following:

- Name of CE providing the information
- Telephone number of the CE providing the information
- Date information is obtained
- Name of CE representative providing the eligibility information

- Name of child
- Child's eligibility category
- Printed name, title, signature, and date of signature of CE's representative

Sites must maintain control over eligibility information and guard against improper disclosure.