



Food and
Nutrition
Service

Park Office
Center

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DATE: January 27, 2016

MEMO CODE: SP 23-2016

SUBJECT: Request for Applications to Participate in New Demonstrations to Evaluate Direct Certification with Medicaid

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

Beginning in school year (SY) 2016-2017, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will conduct new demonstrations to evaluate direct certification using Medicaid data in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). These demonstrations will be conducted under the administrative pilot authority in Section 18(c) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. State agencies that administer the NSLP and SBP are invited to apply to participate in these new demonstrations to evaluate direct certification with Medicaid.

Because direct certification has the potential to improve student access to school meals, reduce administrative burden for schools and local educational agencies, and improve certification accuracy, the new demonstrations will evaluate the impact of using Medicaid data to directly certify students for both **free and reduced price** meal eligibility. Under these demonstrations, State agencies will match school enrollment data with Medicaid eligibility data to identify children who receive Medicaid, or live with a child who receives Medicaid, and whose family income, before expenses and deductions, does not exceed—

- 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for free school meal eligibility; or
- 185 percent of the FPL for reduced price meal eligibility.

Eligible children identified through this matching process can be certified automatically to receive free or reduced price school meal benefits, without requiring the household to submit an application.

Purpose of the New Demonstrations

During the demonstrations, FNS will evaluate—

- the potential of direct certification with Medicaid to enroll children who are eligible for both free and reduced price school meals but are not currently certified to receive meals;
- the potential of direct certification with Medicaid to directly certify eligible children who are currently enrolled for free or reduced price school meals based on a household application; and
- the effect of direct certification with Medicaid on Federal costs and participation in the school lunch and breakfast programs.

Application Process

The attached Request for Applications (RFA) and its appendices include complete instructions on the demonstration project application process and selection of States to participate. The RFA appendices include the following templates for State agencies' use in notifying FNS of their intent to apply to participate in the demonstrations and in developing their application packets:

- Appendix A - Notice of Intent to Apply Template
- Appendix B - Application to Participate in Demonstration Projects
- Appendix C - Letters of Commitment Templates for NSLP and Medicaid State Agencies

For convenience, a Microsoft Word version of the RFA attachments is available both on the FNS Child Nutrition Programs School Meals public website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/policy> and the Child Nutrition Programs PartnerWeb at <https://www.partnerweb.usda.gov/communities/cndpolicy2/Pages/Home.aspx>.

Timeline

Because FNS recognizes the challenges and time needed to establish data-sharing agreements and implement system changes so that data matching can begin, this RFA offers State agencies two application opportunities in 2016—

- Applications are due by **April 15, 2016**, for demonstrations beginning in school year (SY) 2016-2017; and
- Applications are due by **September 15, 2016**, for demonstrations beginning in SY 2017-2018.

State agencies that intend to apply to participate in either school year, SY 2016-2017 or SY 2017-2018, should submit a “Notice of Intent to Apply” to FNS by **March 1, 2016** to assist FNS in planning for the application review and project implementation. Both the Notice of Intent to Apply and the Application to Participate (with required documents) should be emailed to FNS by the applicable deadline.

Send all documents related to this opportunity to participate in the new demonstrations to the following address:

Email: Attn: Vivian Lees at cnstatesystems@fns.usda.gov

Subject line: Direct Certification Demonstrations with Medicaid – [“Notice of Intent to Apply” or “Application to Participate”] - [State Name]

Webinar

In February 2016, FNS, in coordination with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, will host a webinar for State agencies to provide information on the new direct certification with Medicaid demonstrations and the application process for participation. Information about the webinar will be distributed via the Child Nutrition Programs’ PartnerWeb two weeks in advance. Interested State agencies should share the webinar login information with their partnering State Medicaid agencies.

State agencies should direct questions concerning this memorandum, the RFA and the demonstration application process to Vivian Lees via the CN State Systems mailbox at cnstatesystems@fns.usda.gov, with a copy to the appropriate FNS regional office.



Sarah E. Smith-Holmes
Director
Program Monitoring and Operational Support Division
Child Nutrition Programs

Attachments