

Verification Reminders SY 2020-21

Verification of Eligibility Deadlines and Required Actions:

✎ October 1, 2020	Count of approved meal applications
✎ Last operating day in October	Count of students for annual Preliminary and SFA Verification Reports
✎ November 16, 2020	Verification process completed Preliminary Verification Report due – TX-UNPS>Download Forms SNP-123 Verification Report Resources and email link
✎ February 1, 2021	Verification Collection Report (FNS-742) due – TX-UNPS>Applications

Required Forms: www.SquareMeals.org >NSLP>School Meals Applications and Verification

- ✓ **Verification Report/Individual Household Form** – Summary of the verification process for each household.
- ✓ **Letter to Households Selected for Verification of Eligibility** – This letter provides the basic information that is required by regulation. Not required for households directly verified.
- ✓ **Verification Information for Free and Reduced – Price Meals Sheet** must be included with the letter to the households selected for verification of eligibility.
- ✓ **Notification Verification Results/Adverse Action Letter** – (Step 4)

Overview and Actions Prior to Conducting Verification

- Annually, the CE must randomly select and verify a sample of applications approved for benefits. This includes all applications for the CE, not by campus.
- The verification process may begin any time after the CE begins receiving applications. An estimate of applications to be verified can be based on last year's numbers. The CE may not verify more applications than are required based on the sampling method.
- CEs will conduct a Texas ELMS match the end of September to identify any new students since the September 5th upload. Update the Master List to reflect any changes for students identified as Directly Certified (DC) in Texas ELMS; this could reduce the total number of applications counted on October 1. On October 1, the CE counts the actual number of approved applications on file.
- CEs that utilize computer systems are advised to be certain the computer system has correctly calculated verification numbers. Some systems use normal rounding procedures to round down for decimals less than .5 causing the CE to be short of the verification requirement based on the October 1 count.
- At least one application must be verified.
- When determining the required verification sample size of applications to be verified, round all fractions upward.
- CEs should review the *School Food Authority (SFA) Verification Collection Report FNS-742* instructions to ensure accurate data collection from **applications** on October 1 and **students** the last operating day of October.



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

This product was funded by USDA.
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Food and Nutrition Division
National School Lunch Program



Updated 07/2020
www.SquareMeals.org

Verification Reminders SY 2020-21

ARM Section 6 - Verification

- CEs may utilize the form fill *School Food Authority (SFA) Verification Collection Report (FNS-742)* located in the Forms section on the www.SquareMeals.org website to track data that will be entered into the required Preliminary and Verification Collection Reports.
- **Preliminary Verification Report Data** - The count of students reported on the Preliminary Verification Report MUST equal the count of students reported on the SFA Verification Collection Report.
 - All CEs will need to count the number of students enrolled as of October 31st. This includes the number of students with approved applications and the number of students directly certified BY EACH CATEGORY.
 - The count of students with applications does not apply to RCCIs or sites that participate in CEP or P2. CEs that participate in CEP and P2 are required to report the count of students directly certified.
 - The Preliminary Verification Report will open November 1st and is due Monday, November 16th. This is a Jot Form in TX-UNPS Download Forms (SNP-123). A link to the form will be emailed to each child nutrition director.

Step 1: Establishing the Count

- October 1: CEs must count all currently approved applications (SY 2020-21 applications only).
- Applications **INCLUDED**: free income, SNAP /TANF (those with EDG #s), foster, reduced income.
- Students **EXCLUDED** – Children certified under direct certification procedures including children documented as Direct Certified as SNAP, TANF, Medicaid Free, Medicaid Reduced (and extended benefit students), Head Start, identified pre-K free or reduced, Migrant, Homeless/Runaway, or certified Foster; children on RCCI lists; and students on denied applications.

Step 2: Determining the Sampling Method

- The required sampling method is based on October 2019 verification results. TDA will notify each CE by email of sample methods the CE may use. However, any CE may choose to use the Standard Sampling Method.
- New CEs must use Standard (Error Prone) Sampling.

Sampling Methods:

- **Standard (Error Prone) *required, if the non-response rate percent is >20% -**
 - Standard Sample Size method requires CEs to select 3% of all applications on file October 1 or 3,000 (whichever is less), to determine the number of applications to be verified. CEs may not exceed the 3%.
 - Once the number of applications is determined, the selection of applications must first be selected from **error prone** applications, those within \$100 per month (or \$1,200 per year) of the current Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEGs). If there are not enough error prone applications, select non error prone applications to complete the sample size
 - For **manual systems**, it is suggested that error prone applications be identified at time of determination. A colored dot is one way to identify error prone applications. Automated systems should be able to identify error prone applications. Check with your software provider to ensure that this is possible. (arrows to make info more clear

Verification Reminders SY 2020-21

ARM Section 6 - Verification

- **Alternate 1 (Random) Sample Size Method** *option, if the non-response rate percent is <20%—3% or 3,000 (whichever is less) randomly selected from all approved household applications as of October 1 – not just error prone household application.
- **Alternate 2 (Focused) Sample Size Method** *option, if the non-response rate percent is <20%— sample size equals 1,000 or 1% (whichever is less) of all approved applications plus 500 or .5% (whichever is less) of approved SNAP/TANF applications on file as of October 1. The sample is selected first from all approved error prone applications then a random selection from all applications. CEs should use the *Verification Sample Method Worksheet* available in TX-UNPS>Download Forms>SNP-123 Verification Report Resources to determine the verification sample number.

Step 3: Selection of the Household(s)

- CEs should utilize the *Verification Sample Method Worksheet* located in TX-UNPS>Download Forms>SNP-123 Verification Report Resources to determine the number of applications to be selected and to track Direct Verification matches for the Preliminary Verification Report.
- CEs must randomly select the required number of applications based on the sampling method information above.
- CEs must conduct the Confirmation Review on applications selected for verification. A Confirmation Review is not required if CEs utilizing electronic systems have requested a Technology-Based Confirmation exemption from TDA via TX-UNPS.
 - Confirming Official: someone other than the Reviewing Official must review the accuracy of initial eligibility **before** sending out the letter of notification to the household (See Administrator's Reference Manual (ARM), Section 6, Verification for Confirmation Review details).
 - Documentation: Sign/date in appropriate area on household application or electronic note.
- NOTE: The CE may elect to replace up to 5% of the applications selected for verification if the household is considered a “fragile” household. Fragile is defined as those households where it is highly probable that they will not respond to verification due to language barriers or life crisis in the household. CEs must randomly select another household that meets the same criteria as the household being replaced. For example, if the household application was error prone then a new error prone application should be selected and documentation of why this replacement was made should be recorded.
- If the chosen application(s) are matched through one of the following methods the application is considered verified and process is considered complete. The CE does not send letter/instructions to households. When the CE is **not** able to verify the household through direct verification, or DC on October 5th the CE sends the *Verification Letter* and *Verification Information for Free and Reduced Price Meal Sheet* to selected households.
 - **Direct Certification** run on October 5th—Students identified on the October 5th DC match list are considered directly verified. The DC list will serve as documentation of direct verification no further action needed.
 - **Direct Verification** – upload student names identified for verification into the Texas ELMS Direct Verification module for possible matches **prior to sending out notification letters**. If the CE is able to directly verify eligibility, the CE does **not** have to collect documentation from the household. If the CE is able to directly verify eligibility, the CE will take the following steps to finish the verification:
 - The CE prints the match screen, do not send letter to household (verification is complete for these households).

Verification Reminders SY 2020-21

ARM Section 6 - Verification

- The CE completes the *Verification Report/Individual Household Form*.

Step 4: Validation of Eligibility and Follow-Up

The Verification Official identified in the TX-UNPS application packet must review all documents submitted by the household. Documentation of income or receipt of assistance may be provided from any point in time between the month prior to application and the time the household is required to provide documentation.

- Responded—decreased, continued, or increased benefits:
 - Verification is complete.
 - The CE must complete the *Verification Report/Individual Household Form* for each household selected for verification. The Verification Official's signature should be entered on the back of the paper applications and on the bottom of the Verification Report/Individual Household Form.
 - The CE must notify household of results by sending *Continued Benefits* letter (optional) or *Adverse Action* letter (required if benefits decrease)
- Non-responding—Follow Up
 - **The CE MUST** follow-up with a second notification prior to termination (may be via personal contact, phone, email, or letter).
 - The Verification Official's signature should be entered on the back of the paper applications and on the bottom of the Verification Report/Individual Household Form. **The CE MUST** notify households in writing by sending *Adverse Action* letter (10-calendar day notice).

Step 5: Recordkeeping/Reporting

- CEs must retain the Verification Report/Individual Household form for each household verified.
- CEs will upload enrollment in Texas Elms mid-October to identify students for the *Preliminary Verification Report*, due November 16. The jot form report will open November 1st.
- The CE must complete the *School Food Authority (SFA) Verification Collection Report FNS-742* in TX-UNPS between November 16, 2020 and February 1, 2021.
- The CE must print a copy, sign, and file the Verification Collection Report to document completion of the process.
- The CE must retain records with supporting forms for 5 years (public and charter schools) or 3 years (private and Residential Child Care Institutions).

Verification for Cause

A CE must verify any questionable application that provides conflicting information on a case by-case basis. Verification for cause may be conducted at any time during the school year.

- The CE will follow the same process using the same prototype notification letters used for required verification when conducting verification for cause.
- The number applications verified for cause as of November 15 must be reported in section 5-8 in addition to the verification requirement.
- Verification for cause may be conducted at any time during the school year.

Reasons for Selection of Application for Verification for Cause

Verification for cause is not an automatic process. Any application that is selected to be verified for cause is chosen because it is considered to be a questionable application:

- The CE is unable to confirm a household's participation in a Categorical Assistance Eligible program.
- The CE determines that known or available information is conflicting.

Verification Reminders SY 2020-21

ARM Section 6 - Verification

- The CE determines that known or available information indicates a mistake or misrepresentation on the application form.

Resources

- Bi-Weekly emails providing most current updates (sent out via e-mail from your ESC)
- TDA website: www.SquareMeals.org
- TDA Administrator's Reference Manual, Section 3: *Civil Rights and Confidentiality* Section 4: *Determining Eligibility* and Section 6: *Verification*
- NSLP Administration & Forms: School Meals Applications and Verification
- TX-UNPS Download Forms>SNP-123 Verification Report Resources and Jot Form required for reporting
- USDA Eligibility Manual
- USDA School Food Authority (SFA) Verification Collection Report – FNS 742