



Bulletin

NUMBER

#16-68-02

DATE

February 12, 2016

OF INTEREST TO

County Directors

Social Services Supervisors
and Staff

Tribal Social Services
Supervisors and Staff

ACTION/DUE DATE

Read information and
implement

EXPIRATION DATE

February 12, 2016

Direct Certification of Children in Foster Care for School Lunch and Food Programs

TOPIC

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 [Public Law 111-296] and direct certification.

PURPOSE

To inform county and tribal caseworkers of the process for certifying children in foster care for free and reduced cost school meals; requirements of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

CONTACT

Beth Chaplin, social service consultant
651-431-4919
beth.chaplin@state.mn.us

SIGNED

JAMES G. KOPPEL
Assistant Commissioner
Children and Family Services Administration

TERMINOLOGY NOTICE

The terminology used to describe people we serve has changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the use of "People First" language.

Background

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 [Public Law 111-296] makes foster children categorically eligible for free school meals.

A foster child whose care and placement is the responsibility of an agency that administers a state plan under part B or E of Title IV of the Social Security Act [42 U.S.C. 621 et seq.], or a foster child who a court has placed with a caretaker household, is eligible for free school meals without need for an application. All foster care children are eligible, including those not eligible for Title IV-E foster care.

Direct Certification

The Minnesota Departments of Education (MDE) and Human Services (DHS) are partnering to directly certify foster children's status for school lunch and food programs. Data shared between the two agencies allows MDE to transmit information about eligible foster care students directly to the school in which they are enrolled. The direct certification process takes place monthly. As such, to ensure that free school meal benefits begin for the child immediately when they first enter a foster care placement, documentation should be provided to the school by the foster child's caseworker or foster parents, as described below.

Documentation to be Provided to School's Upon Initial Placement

When a child first enters a foster care placement (initial placement), their foster parent/provider or caseworker should provide documentation of a child's foster care status directly to local educational agencies (schools). This will ensure that there is no delay in a child receiving school lunch or food program benefits. After this initial certification is completed, the direct certification process will ensure that a child is appropriately recognized as being eligible for school lunch and food programs. This includes changes between grade levels (advancing from one grade to the next) and school changes within Minnesota. When a child in foster care changes schools, the foster parent/provider or caseworker should confirm with the school that information regarding a child's eligibility status has been received by the school.

To provide the school with information for the initial certification of a child entering foster care, the foster parent/provider or caseworker will utilize the Certification of Foster Child Status for School Lunch or Food Program (DHS-6384) form. This form is available on the [Minnesota Department of Human Services website](#) by searching for 6384, or by following this link to the [DHS-6384 form](#).

A child's foster parent/caretaker or caseworker must complete the certification form. A child's caseworker needs to sign the form to "certify" a child's foster care status. To ensure a child's eligibility for school lunch or food program is recognized by the school, the completed and signed certification form must be provided to the person responsible for the school nutrition program, or the person responsible for maintaining student records.

Child Care and the Child and Adult Food Program

Child care programs do not participate in direct certification. However, foster children are eligible to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program when receiving child care services from participating child care providers. The completed DHS-6834 certification form must be provided directly to child care provider to certify the child's eligibility. If the child changes providers, or in any other situation where eligibility for food programs is needed by a child care provider, the foster parent/provider or caseworker must provide the certification form directly to the provider.

Foster households are not required to submit an Application for Educational Benefits to the school to qualify for school meal benefits on behalf of a foster child in addition to the certification form.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling (651) 431-4670 (voice) or toll free at (800) 627-3529 or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.