

Checklist for Online Free and Reduced Applications

If a school has an online application for meals, it must contain all of the required information listed below. Please get approval from the Indiana Department of Education before purchasing or implementing a new online Free and Reduced Application. If the software, equipment, and/or service costs \$5,000 or more, you will need to contact Tina Herzog for approval. Her email is cherzog@doe.in.gov. **Schools are responsible for notifying and ensuring that their software programmers make the required changes.**

If the school uses a computer or web-based system as one of their application processes, the letter to households must inform the household how to access the system in order to apply for benefits. It also must explain how the household may obtain and submit a paper application, such as including a telephone number or a form to request an application. The information letter may be distributed by the postal service, emailed to the parent/guardian, or provided through the information packet provided to students. Notification by phone messaging system is not acceptable.

- If asking for a student identification number, the household must be informed that these data fields are not required by the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, or the Special Milk Program
- Input areas for Name of Child, Living with Parent or Caretaker Relative, Birth Date, School, and Grade
- Foster Child section with instructions
- Homeless, Migrant, and Runaway section with instructions
- Input area for a SNAP (Food Stamp) or TANF case number
- Input area for children's income and frequency
- Input area for household members names with income and frequency
- Ability to recognize and accept whole dollar amounts
- Social Security input area for last 4 digits and check box to indicate they do not have a Social Security number
- Attestation Statement – A statement to certify that the information submitted is true; that school officials may verify the information on the application; and that misrepresentation may lead to prosecution – see Step 4 on Indiana's Household Application prototype
- Textbook Assistance accept or decline box with Textbook attestation statement – see Step 5 on Indiana's Household Application prototype
- Hoosier Healthwise accept box with a statement the that application will be shared with Family and Social Services Administration – see Step 5 on Indiana's Household Application prototype
- Race and Ethnicity – see OPTIONAL on Indiana's Household Application prototype
- Use of Information Statement– see page 2 of Indiana's Household Application prototype
- Non-discrimination Statement– see page 2 of the Indiana's Household Application Prototype

- Electronic Signature – “Electronic Signature” means an electronic sound, symbol, or process attached to or logically associated with an electronic record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the electronic record. This record or signature may not be denied legal effect or enforceability solely because it is in electronic form. Examples of potential signatures include but are not limited to:
 - Click OK on a screen
 - Password
 - PIN Number
 - Digitized Signature
 - Digital Signature
 - Fingerprint Scan
 - Retina Scan

The Indiana Department of Education, United States Department of Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Services do not evaluate, recommend, approve, or endorse any software used for certification or verification purposes. There are no Federal specifications for software vendors. Schools are responsible for assuring that any automated certification and verification processes meet all regulatory requirements and policies, including the calculation of income frequencies, and that the software used is performing correctly and meets all requirements.

Tips and Reminders

- Make sure notification letters include all of the same information as Indiana’s Notification Letter templates, also make sure the software system accurately changes eligibility, for instance:
 - During the 30 operating-day carryover when a household reapplies, if an application is processed and eligibility benefits are decreased, benefits should be reduced 10 calendar days from the date of the notification letter.
 - When a household reapplies and the eligibility benefits stay the same or are better, these benefit assignments should take place immediately.
- Schools still need to have paper applications available at the school for households to complete if they do not want to complete the application online.
- Online applications need to have a section that indicates the approver, the approval date, and what criteria the application was approved on. Also, if changes are made to the application during the school year, the old approval information should remain somewhere within the system.
- Schools are required to keep applications on file for five years. If there is an issues with an audit or review, schools might need to keep applications longer than 5 years. Systems should not delete the applications once the system is rolled over to a new year.
- All applications should not be converted automatically to annual income. If the household reports one pay frequency, the application should process based on that one pay frequency. For example if a household reports all of their income as weekly, that application needs to be figured as weekly.
- The last four digits of a Social Security Number is only required for households that have included income information on their application. Applications approved based on Food Stamp/TANF, Foster, Migrant, Runaway, or Homeless status are not required to provide a Social Security Number.