Verification Webinar

1. Thank you for joining this training session on the Verification Process. To get started make sure your speakers are on and turned up. Look for the directional arrows on the page. You will use these arrows to navigate forward or backward through the presentation. Once you are finished viewing the page, you will need to click the forward button to move to the next slide. If you need to increase the size of the slide, you can use the zoom function to magnify the image. If you do not have speakers, we have posted the narrative so you can print it and read along as you view the slide. Next slide

2. In this tutorial, you will learn the basic skills needed to successfully implement this process within your organization. Most importantly, should you have any questions or concerns during verification please know that you can call the state office for assistance. We are here to help!
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3. Today we will take a step-by-step approach for completing the verification process. We will include specific information on where you can locate the instructions and letters on our website for Verification and Direct Verification.
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4. Hopefully by now, you are familiar with our website. The address is www.doe.in.gov/food. If you scroll to the middle of our home page you will find a purple box with the heading "School Nutrition Programs", circled in red in this snap shot of the website. All of the links referred to in today's presentation can be found by clicking on the School Nutrition Programs link.
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5. After you click on "School Nutrition Programs" you will see not only your login for the CNPweb, but also a heading below it entitled "Free and Reduced Price Information". Your "best friend" during the verification process will be the Eligibility Guidance Manual, seen here circled in red. This manual contains information on Federal requirements regarding the determination and verification of eligibility for free and reduced price meals. The Eligibility Guidance Manual will answer questions that we won't cover today. Print a copy of the manual so you have it handy and refer to it often.
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6. Schools are required to verify approved applications on file as of October 1 using the **standard** (error prone) sample or <u>if the school qualifies</u>, alternate- **random or alternate-focused**. For sponsors that allow their sites or school buildings to select applications for the verification process, it would be best to centrally calculate the number of applications each school building or site should verify to insure the final number of applications at the sponsor level is not over 3%. Students who are directly certified, homeless, runaway, or a part of the migrant education program are not subject to verification. Additionally, verification for cause cases would not be counted in the verification summary report. Next Slide

7. Let's discuss the three types of verification, standard, alternate-random, and alternate-focused. In the standard method of verification, you will select 3% of error prone applications. Error prone applications are those that are within $100 of the monthly amount or $1200 of the yearly amount on the income eligibility guidelines. It is wise to flag your error prone application when processing in August. In the alternate-random method of verification, you randomly select 3% of applications. In the alternate-focused method of verification, you calculate 1% of all applications and select that

number from error prone applications. PLUS select .5% of all categorical applications. Both the alternate-random and alternate-focused methods may be used only if you had less than 20% non response rate on last year's verification summary report. Non-responders are applications chosen for verification for households that did not respond to the verification process last year. If you cannot calculate your non-response rate from the previous school year's verification summary report, contact the State for more information on which method you are able to use.
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8. The Standard or Error Prone Sample is 3% of the total applications on file as of October 1 and selected from approved *error prone*[1] applications. In cases in which there are not enough error prone applications, sponsors must randomly select additional applications to fulfill the 3% requirement. Error prone applications *are* those applications with an income listed within $100/month or $1,200/year above or below the free eligibility limit or $100/month or $1,200/year below the reduced-price eligibility limit. If you don't have free and reduced software to select these error prone applications, it might be wise to flag all error prone applications during the approval process. For example if you have 210 approved applications on file as of October 1, you need to verify seven applications. In order to get the number 7, take 210 which is the number of approved application on file times .03 which is 3% this will equal 6.3. Always round up which will give you 7. These seven applications must be selected from error prone applications and completed by November 15. If you have only six error-prone applications, the seventh is selected <u>randomly</u> from the rest of the applications. If you have eight error prone apps, you only verify seven of them. Next Slide

9. Alternate-Random Sample is optional for schools if they had less than 20% of non-ressponders (households that did not respond), a sponsor may select 3% at random from approved applications on file as of October 1 (regardless of error-prone). For example if you have 210 approved applications on file as of October 1, you will need to verify 7 applications. In order to get the number seven, take 210 which is the number of approved applications on file times .03 which is 3% this will equal 6.3. Always round up which will give you 7. For random selection, you would randomly choose from your files 7 applications. Next Slide

10. Alternate-Focused Sample is optional for schools if they had less than 20% of non-responders (households that did not respond) to the verification process in the previous school year. If qualified to use this alternate sample, a school would calculate 1% of <u>all</u> approved applications on file as of October 1. Select these from error- prone income applications PLUS .5% of all approved food stamp or TANF applications as of October 1. For 210 approved applications on file as of October 1 using this method, you would need 3 error prone applications. In order to get the number 3, take 210 which is the number of approved applications on file times .01 which is 1% this will equal 2.1. Always round up which will give you 3. If 60 of the applications were FS/TANF applications, you would only need to verify one application. In order to get the number 1, take 60 which is the number of applications that are Food Stamp/TANF applications times .005 which is .5% this will equal .3. Always round up which will give you one application. Therefore, you will need to approve 3 error-prone applications and 1 Food Stamp/TANF application. These are the three different methods in which schools can pull their sample size for verification. Next Slide

11. At any point during the year if you have reason to believe that a household is being dishonest about their income, you would choose that application for verification in addition to your verification sample. This is called verification for cause. You are required to verify any applications that have inconsistencies or questionable information on them. Applications that are verified for cause cannot be part of your verification sample.
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12. Once you have pulled the applications, the applications must be reviewed to determine that the original eligibility was correctly determined. This is called a confirmation review and must be done by someone other than the original approver. When it is confirmed the application was originally approved correctly, have the confirmation reviewer sign the back of the application on the confirmation review line just above the verification box. The confirmation review may be waived if you use computer software that accurately makes eligibility determinations. If the initial determination is incorrect, you must correct the household's eligibility status and notify the household of the change with an explanation and allow the household to reapply. Make copies of the application(s) selected for verification and place the originals in a separate file labeled "verification".
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13. The next step is to logon to the STN database and do direct verification. Direct Verification is optional and is not required but is highly suggested by the Indiana Department of Education. Unlike direct certification, direct verification verifies an application based on Food Stamp, TANF, and Medicaid information. If you find a household listed and the information confirms the status of the application, print the information and attach to the application, and verification is complete for that application. Simply file in your verification folder and you are done (you only need to verify one student on a multi-student family application to consider the application verified). If you do not find the household listed, a verification letter must be sent to the household.
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14. This is the Application Center logon screen. You will need an id and password to login. If you do not have a logon id or password, contact the person in your corporation who files the required STN reports for your school and that person can give you the logon id and password.
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15. To complete direct verification, select Lookup, Direct Verification from the pull down menu in the STN database. Unlike direct certification which matches against the most current Food Stamp and TANF data, Direct Verification searches back 180 days from the date of application. Therefore, the date the parent/guardian signed the application is important.
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16. You can search by case number, student information, or guardian information. Enter your preference by selecting the radio button and entering the information. Then click on the Search button at the bottom right.
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17. If a match is found, click on the "view" icon to display the results.
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18. Once the results are displayed, click on the Print Information button and attach the printed copy to the original application. Complete the verification section on the back of the application and file the application in your verification file. There is no need to send a letter to the household informing them of the verification process.
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19. Verification instructions can be found on our website under Free and Reduced Price Information. Click on Verification Information then click on Verification-How To.

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20. For the applications that cannot be directly verified, a letter must be sent to the household notifying them that their application has been selected for verification and instructing them to send proof of income or food stamp/TANF benefits. The verification notification letter can be found on our website under Free and Reduced Price Information. Click on Verification, then click on We Must Check Your Application found under Verification--Meals
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21. Sources of Verification include written evidence, collateral contacts, and agency records. The main source of verification and the one that we will focus on is written evidence. Written evidence is most often pay stubs from employers or award letters for welfare departments or other government agencies submitted by the household to the verifying officials as confirmation of eligibility. Acceptable written evidence for income eligible households contain the name of the household member, amount of income received, frequency received, and the date the income was received. For example, a pay stub with no dates would not be sufficient. Acceptable written evidence for categorically eligible households contains a written statement from the Food Stamp or TANF agency that specifies that the child is a member of a household which is receiving benefits such as a notice of eligibility. Next Slide

22. For information on collateral contacts and agency records review the income eligibility guidance manual on pages 73-74. Acceptable documentation may be provided for any point in time between the month prior to the approved application until the time the household is required to provide income documentation. When a household indicates no income on their application and the household is selected for regular verification or verification for cause, the sponsor must request an explanation of how living expenses are met and may request additional written documentation or collateral contacts.
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23. If the household benefits change from free to reduced or are terminated, schools must notify the household and change the benefit after 10 days of notification. The first day of the ten-calendar-day advance notice is the day the notice is sent. Households affected by a reduction or termination of benefits may reapply at anytime during the school year. However, if benefits to a household have been terminated and the household reapplies in the same school year, the household is required to submit income documentation or proof of participation in food stamps or TANF at the time of reapplication. The school must verify the households' eligibility prior to approval. These are not considered new applications. If the household benefits change from R-F, you must notify the household in 3 days and change the benefit immediately. In the event that a household does not respond, follow up with a phone call. If the household still doesn't respond to verification, the benefits must be terminated after 10 days.
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24. After verification is complete, you must notify the household if benefits stay the same, if they change, or if they are terminated. The letter notifying households of their benefit status after verification can be found on our website under Free and Reduced Information. Click on We Have Checked your Application under the heading Verification—Meals.
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25. Verification must be complete by November 15. Federal regulations of the National School Lunch Program require the Indiana Department of Education to collect a summary report of verification efforts from all sponsors. Reports will be filed through the CNPweb after a school files their October claim for reimbursement. It will be located under the Claims/AFR tab in the CNPweb. The verification summary

report must be completed on the CNP Web by December 15. Next Slide

26. This concludes our presentation on the verification process. Thank you for joining us, and we hope that you have found it informative and helpful.