

# Nourishing News



IDAHO STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS

APRIL 2009



## Direct Certification/ Verification/ Application

This publication has been sent to all:

- School Food Service Directors
- School Food Service Kitchen Managers

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### UPCOMING TRAININGS

NSLP Healthy Edge

Serving it Safe

Preview the Review

Menu Planning for the New Idaho Nutrition Standards and the SMI

Personnel Management for Child Nutrition Programs

Cooking with Whole Grains

Focus on the Customer

*Various dates and locations; please check our training website for more details.*

To sign up for Child Nutrition trainings or for more information, visit our training web site: [www.databasesdoneright.com/nutrition/](http://www.databasesdoneright.com/nutrition/)

- CIRCULATE TO:  Superintendent  Principal  
 School Nurse  Health Teacher  Kitchen Staff

## Benefits of Direct Certification

- Reduces the paperwork burden on families and schools by removing the need for a paper application.
- Increases the likelihood that eligible children receive school meals benefits. Studies have shown that direct certification is effective in ensuring that more eligible children are enrolled for school meals.
- Removes families that are directly certified from further application verification procedures. This is beneficial because families could lose their benefits due to communication barriers.
- Strengthens the school meals programs. Studies have found direct certification to be a highly accurate enrollment method, so expanding direct certification can help build support for the programs.



## A Message from the Director

The Idaho State Department of Education, Child Nutrition Program was awarded a USDA Direct Certification (DC) grant in October 2008. So, what is direct certification and

what does this mean for you? Under direct certification, school districts use information from the State Health and Welfare database to certify children to receive free meals. To qualify, the children's families must receive Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Families in Idaho (TAFI), or assistance from the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Children's families who are directly certified do not have to complete an application at their local school district. Direct certification was designed primarily to improve National School Lunch Program access and administrative efficiency.

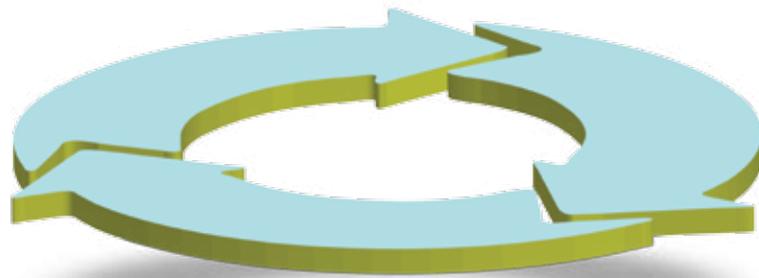
The State of Idaho has administered the DC process for several years; however the process used has been an annual letter mailed to parents from the Food Stamp office. This process has been time consuming at both the state and the Local Education Authority level. The purpose of this grant is to implement an *Electronic Direct Certification* process throughout the State of Idaho. The new electronic process will allow the Idaho State Department of Education to

field a system that supports long-term direct certification procedures. Implementation of the electronic direct certification process will occur with the support of the monies from this USDA grant. The major goal of this project is to provide an electronic web based application for sponsor level users to access. Users will be able to either enter student level records to check for eligibility directly through the application web interface or upload a batch of student names. **The system will be very secure and will require a user name and password.**

USDA studies have shown nationwide that *Electronic Direct Certification* can increase efficiency, lower costs, and improve program integrity by reducing paperwork and increasing the percentage of eligible students who are certified for free meals. Schools and school districts that use direct certification have fewer applications to process.

In summary, we are currently working with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Food Stamp Office and the Idaho State Department of Education, I.T. section, on the development of this program. This newsletter discusses DC and this grant, including the upcoming training that will occur regionally throughout the state. Idaho State Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs is very excited about this new process and will keep everyone updated as the program is unveiled.

Sincerely,  
Colleen Fillmore, PhD, RD, LD  
CNP Director



## Renewal Time Basics for National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Sponsors

Mary Jo Marshall BS, Coordinator

It is time once again for NSLP sponsors to renew their agreement with the State agency to operate the National School Lunch Program. This is a yearly requirement and occurs in the spring to ensure that the process is completed and approved in time for the new state fiscal year which officially starts on July 1. The State agency often needs to contact the director to clarify information for the renewal. Because many schools are closing down for the summer in May and the contact person may be on vacation for an extended period of time, the deadline to have the renewal submitted has been set for May 8, 2009.

We are instituting a new "greener" approach to the

renewal process this year. No hardcopy renewal letter or set of instructions will be mailed to renewing sponsors.

All documents you will need to complete the renewal process will be available on the Child Nutrition Programs website at [www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/](http://www.sde.idaho.gov/site/cnp/).

Please have the on-line instructions and checklist available to refer to when working on your renewal to ensure that you have completed all required items. You will need to return the checklist to SDE with a few of the renewal documents we still need in "hardcopy."

Menus will be required again this year and we are asking for a specific week in April 2009. Details for menu submission requirements are in the on-line instructions.

Sponsors who wish to begin contracting with a Food Service Management Company for the 2009-2010 school year should contact the State agency before they issue an Invitation for Bid or a Request for Proposal and MUST send a copy of the chosen unsigned contract to the State agency for review before it is signed and awarded.



## Specific Week of Menus Need to be Sent in with the Annual Renewal

Anna Mae Florence RD, LD, Coordinator

The annual renewal for being a National School Lunch Program sponsor will soon be due. Again this year the State agency (SA) is requesting that menus be sent in with the agreement and specifically the menus need to be from one of two weeks, either the week of April 6-10, 2009 or from April 13-17, 2009.



Basically, menus need to be sent in during the renewal process so that the SA can see if any school districts need assistance with their menu planning method choice. We have observed during reviews that some districts need clarification on the requirements for their particular menu planning method.

If you are Food Based menu planning (FBMP) -Traditional or Enhanced- you will need to send in:

- Menus from either week (see above)
- Production Records from that week

The SA will be checking to make sure that the FBMP is being followed by looking at Production Records. They should include:

- Portion sizes, appropriate for the grades
- All components in the correct amounts
- Enough food prepared to feed the number of students anticipated

If you are Nutrient Standard menu planning (NSMP), you will need to send in additional information.

- Menu for the week (see above)
- Production Records for that week
- A printout with the district's and menu names RDAs
- A printout of the nutrient analysis for that week. If you are using Nutrikids, go to Menu List/Print, then Menu Spreadsheet. Plug in the week that you are sending and choose Detail and Portion Values along with all the nutrients except Trans Fat. The menu will come up and be ready to print.

The SA will be checking to make sure that the NSMP is being followed by looking to see if:

- There are menus for age/grades within the district
- The correct age/grade groupings are being used
- Recipes and the nutrients they contain seem appropriate
- Breakfast and lunch menus are correctly combined (if applicable)

If the SA notices some mistakes you will be asked to attend one of the regional classes that will be offered to improve compliance with your menu planning method. The training is called "Is Your Menu Planning System in Compliance?"

## Direct Certification – It's Coming!!

Lynda Westphal MHS, Coordinator

Many of you may be wondering about the Direct Certification coming soon to your district. The State Agency is developing a database between Health and Welfare and the State Department of Education that will have this process available for you to access on-line! The district will be able to upload their student database to the State Department of Education and a file will be sent to the food service directors at each school district.

While we don't have all the final details on how the database will work (it is just being developed) we will offer regional training opportunities to familiarize staff with the general principles. After the initial training, there should be an on-line version of the training available to refresh your memory at any time. A Direct Certification Manual will also be available to help you work your way through the processes.

One thing is certain, we are moving away from paper copies of the letter and going to a "real-time" system where you should be able to check a child's status when they arrive at your district. We hope to have this up and running before the end of this year.

Watch for more information to be e-mailed to you in the near future. Make sure your e-mail address is correct in CNP2000.

GUEST ARTICLE

## Direct Certification Helps Feed More Children

Rosie Andueza, Food Stamp Program Manager

The Direct Certification interface currently being developed between the Department of Health and Welfare and the Department of Education will streamline the process of enrolling children in the National School Lunch program. Our current process (of sending out letters one time per year to families receiving Food Stamps) is archaic, inefficient and costly. The new automated information exchange will serve to simplify the process for families and Department staff as well as to increase the numbers of children receiving this vital food assistance.

I am extremely excited to be involved in this project. Combating the issue of hunger in Idaho is near and dear to my heart. Every little step we can take to make sure that Idaho's children are fed gets us one step closer to this goal. As Idaho's Food Stamp caseload continues to grow in unprecedented numbers, the Direct Certification interface will ensure that all of the children currently receiving food stamps will also receive hot, nutritious meals while they are at school.

The partnership between our two Departments has been absolutely incredible. Both parties have the same goal, vision and energy dedicated to making Direct Certification a reality in Idaho. It is by working together that we will be able to better serve Idahoans.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at 208.334.5553.

### RULES AND GUIDELINES OF DIRECT CERTIFICATION

## Rules and Guidelines of Direct Certification (DC)

- Using the Electronic DC process reduces the burden for low-income families and for schools and builds a certification process that is more accurate.

- Once a student is approved in the free category using the DC process that student is to remain on free eligibility the remainder of the school year.

- If a family completes a F/R application and also is on the DC list from Food Stamps, the DC information takes precedence over the F/R application.

- The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires that children in food stamp households be directly certified for free school meals.

# Inside Poster: Foods to Increase in Idaho Schools

Mary Jo Marshall BS, Coordinator

The poster included in this month's issue of the newsletter can be a useful guide when revising your menus as you work towards meeting the new Nutrition Standards for Idaho in school meals. We are encouraging you to be proactive and incorporate as many of the items referred to on the poster as possible in your meals. A good place to begin your menu updates is in the areas of whole grains, fruits, vegetables and fiber; because offering foods in these categories will make it easier to meet the other standards. Refer to the menu tips listed on the poster for marketing and presentation ideas of these essential foods. Sample menus are also included to use as is or to inspire you.



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