

# Certification and Benefit Issuance

---

Certification and benefit issuance refers to the process used to determine a student's eligibility for free or reduced-price meal benefits and the method used to apply the correct meal benefit level for the student at the point of service.

Certification documents include either eligibility application for free or reduced-price meals, direct certification, or other categorical eligibility determinations. Benefit issuance documents, including rosters or master lists, and any other medium that is used by the school to identify the eligibility categories of students at the point-of-serve.

When a local educational agency (LEA) enters into an agreement with the California Department of Education (CDE) to operate the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs the LEA must establish a Free and Reduced-Price Meal Policy Statement. As part of the school nutrition program sponsor application process, the Nutrition Services Division (NSD) provides the LEA with a policy statement template.

LEAs must check to ensure that students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals. As part of the Free and Reduced Price Policy Statement, LEAs must designate a Determining Official who is responsible for reviewing the applications for completeness and determining whether the household is eligible for free or reduced-price meals. If they are not eligible, students must pay an amount established by the district or agency for meals.

**This institution is an equal opportunity provider.**

For more information on the Certification and Benefit Issuance process see the [Quick Reference Guide to Certification and Benefit Issuance](#).

After you have reviewed the information contained in the Quick Reference Guide, try the [Apply Your Knowledge](#) self-check.

---

The School Nutrition Primer can be utilized by food service directors and administrators as a Professional Standards training resource. Reviewing the **Quick Reference Guides** with staff and administering the **Apply Your Knowledge** self-check quiz may count for 15 minute training.

The training topic Certification and Benefit Issuance provides the following Professional Standards:

**Key Area:** Administration (3000)

**Key Topic:** Free and Reduced-price Meal Benefits (3100)

**Learning Objective:** Certify and Process Applications (3110); Understand Community Eligibility (3130)

Developed for the SNP Primer  
Cal-Pro-NET Center at San Jose State University  
in conjunction with California Department of Education  
September 2016

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.