

Checklist of Steps to Improve Program Access

To Improve Direct Certification for Children in Households Receiving SNAP Benefits

- Regularly assess progress toward reaching all children in households receiving SNAP benefits
- Refine the data matching process
- Use any available data to reach all children in the household
- Conduct matches as often as possible and develop the capacity to look up individual children
- Regularly provide training and guidance for staff

To Expand Direct Certification for Children Receiving Other Means-tested Benefits

- Apply to participate in the Medicaid direct certification demonstration project
- Strengthen direct certification for children in households receiving TANF cash assistance or FDPIR benefits

To Strengthen Direct Certification for Children in Foster Care and Homeless, Migrant, and Runaway Children

- Use data from the state or local child welfare agency to directly certify children in foster care
- Use the automatic notification a school receives when a child enters foster care or changes foster homes as the basis for direct certification
- Strengthen the direct certification process for homeless, migrant, and runaway children who have been identified by appropriate officials
- Complete an application on behalf of an individual child — especially an unaccompanied youth — who is known to be eligible, but whose family has not applied

To Simplify Applications and Encourage Eligible Families to Apply

- Provide materials in a language and at a level that parents can understand
- Ask only for information necessary to determine eligibility
- Reduce the potential for applicants to make calculation errors
- Include school meals information in routine contacts with families and communities throughout the school year to encourage newly eligible families to apply

To Retain Eligible Children Throughout the School Year

- Eliminate temporary approvals
- For children who enroll during the school year, rely on the previous eligibility determination if it can be obtained promptly or conduct a new certification — using direct certification or a new application
- Conduct direct verification
- For applications that cannot be directly verified, accept the least burdensome form of reliable documentation and clearly explain to parents what they must provide

To Utilize the Community Eligibility Option

- Apply to USDA to implement community eligibility during the 2013-2014 school year
- For subsequent school years, implement community eligibility in schools or districts that serve predominantly low-income students