Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program

December 2 and 3, 2009

Presentation to School Nutrition Association For USDA, Food and Nutrition Service
Overview of the Presentation

- Implementation progress
- State performance measures
- Best practices
- Extending direct certification to additional children in the household
Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program: State Implementation Progress

Report to Congress

October 2009

Implementation Progress

(What percent of LEAs use direct certification?)
Implementation Progress

Source: Verification Summary Reports (FNS-742).
Why aren’t we at 100%?

- Private LEAs and other single school LEAs may have difficulty with implementation
- Measurement issues –
  - VSR measures LEAs with children not subject to verification, a proxy for LEAs with directly certified children
  - We want to measure LEAs with a process for direct certification (some LEAs may have no eligible children)
Percent of LEAs Directly Certifying Students, by LEA Size - SY2008-09

Source: Verification Summary Reports (FNS-742).
State Performance Measures

(What percent of eligible children are directly certified?)
Measuring the Effectiveness of Direct Certification

Estimate of the percent of SNAP participants directly certified for free school meals

\[
\text{students certified for free meals and not subject to verification} = \frac{\text{school-age children in SNAP households}}{\text{SNAP children in non-base year Provision 2/3 schools}}
\]

May overestimate direct certifications

May overstate eligible children in areas with significant dropouts
State Performance: Direct Certification

Nationally, 71% of children in SNAP-participant households are directly certified.

Number of States by percent of school-age SNAP participant children directly certified for free meals

- <60%: 10 states
- 60-70%: 13 states
- 70-80%: 15 states
- 80-90%: 9 states
- >90%: 4 states
State Performance: Categorical Certification

Nationally, 85% of categorically eligible children were certified for free meals directly or by application.
Best Practices
## 7 States Participated in a Best Practice Review

### Characteristics of Direct Certification Matching Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Who does the match?</th>
<th>How does it work?</th>
<th>How often?</th>
<th>Monthly updates?</th>
<th>Lookup tool?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>LEAs get SNAP/TANF data for their county via web</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>State distributes match results via web</td>
<td>Biannual</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>State distributes match results via web</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Regional ITCs</td>
<td>ITCs match students to statewide SNAP/TANF data</td>
<td>Biannual</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>LEAs get SNAP/TANF data for their county</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>LEAs get SNAP/TANF data for their ZIP codes</td>
<td>Biannual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>LEAs get SNAP/TANF data (on disk) for children who report being in their district.</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>
Results of Best Practice Review

1. No “one size fits all” approach
   - State vs. district-level match depends on size and configuration of LEAs in the State
   - Matching rules depend on content and quality of the student enrollment data

2. Ways to improve direct certification effectiveness
   - Increase frequency by providing monthly updates of newly certified SNAP participants
   - Provide a “look-up” method for small LEAs and for handling transfer students
   - Use the web for data exchange
Extending Direct Certification to Additional Children in the Household
At Issue: Data matching is imperfect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SNAP records</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First name</td>
<td>Last name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britney</td>
<td>Cruz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Cruz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>Cruz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student enrollment records</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First name</td>
<td>Last name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittney</td>
<td>Cruz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>Cruz-Guzman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>Cruz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exact match on name and date of birth works for only one child in the household.
At Issue: Data matching is imperfect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Id</th>
<th>SNAP records</th>
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<th>Student enrollment records</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First name</td>
<td>Last name</td>
<td>DOB</td>
<td>HH ID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Britney</td>
<td>Cruz</td>
<td>06/26/2001</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Cruz</td>
<td>03/09/1997</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Caleb</td>
<td>Cruz</td>
<td>09/23/1999</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exact match on name and date of birth works for only one child in the household.
Identifying Additional Children in the Household

State-level matching

1. State can identify additional SNAP records to send to LEAs

or

2. LEAs can link children in the same household using enrollment data

These work if:

#1 – SNAP provides a way to link children in a household (e.g., case ID or parent name).

#2 – LEA enrollment data provides a way to link children in a household (e.g., household ID or parent name).
Identifying Additional Children in the Household

District-level matching

1. LEAs can identify SNAP records for unmatched children in SNAP households that have a matched child

or

2. LEAs can link children in the same household using enrollment data

These work if:

#1 – SNAP provides a way to link children in a household (e.g., case ID or parent name).

#2 – LEA enrollment data provides a way to link children in a household (e.g., household ID or parent name).
Current Status

LEAs using direct certification

• 78% of LEAs appear to be using direct certification (may need better measures in addition to better compliance)

• 96% of students are enrolled in LEAs using direct certification

Certification of eligible children

• 71% of children from SNAP-participant households were directly certified

• 85% of all categorically eligible students were certified for free meals by direct certification or application
For More Information

Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program: State Implementation Progress Report to Congress - October 2009


Report Summary