

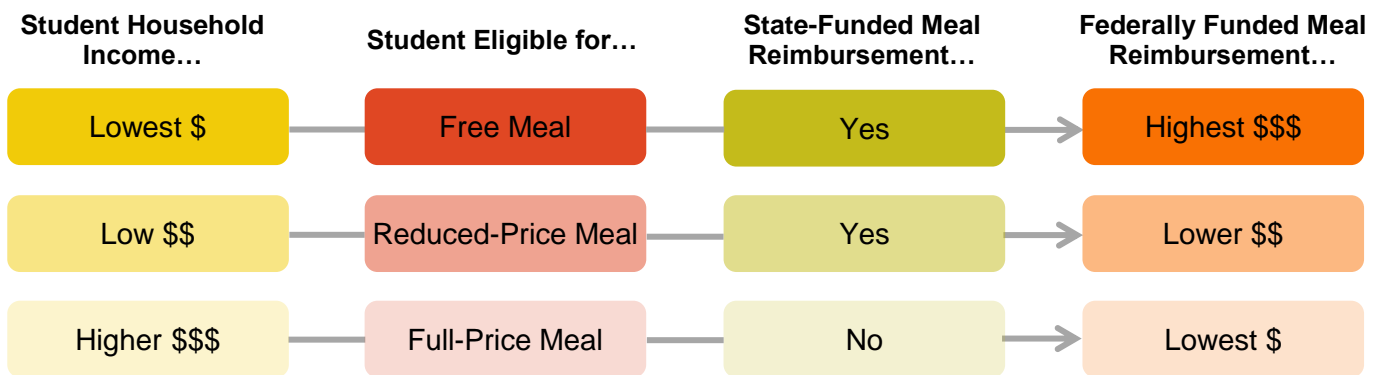
Direct Certification Facts

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School Meal Basics

- All public schools can operate the federal school lunch and school breakfast programs.
- Low-income students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals.
- Participating schools receive a federally funded reimbursement for each meal served. Schools receive the highest reimbursement for meals served to the lowest-income students.
- California schools receive a state-funded reimbursement for meals served to lower-income students. The federal reimbursement is several times larger than the state -- both are vital to the school meal programs.



Determining Student Eligibility

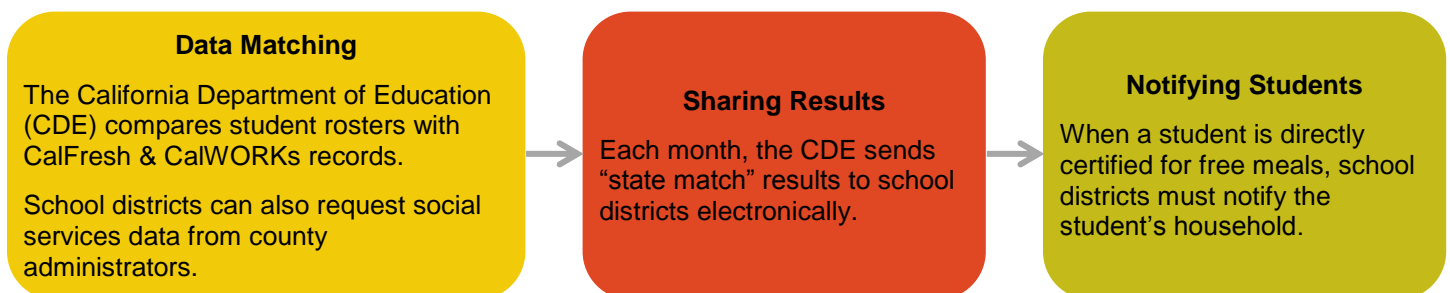
Two processes are used to determine students' eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals.

- Certification:** school districts primarily use household applications (online or paper) and direct certification (details below) to deem students eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.
- Verification:** school districts verify the accuracy of a certain percentage of household applications used for certification.

Direct Certification

Direct certification is an efficient method for schools to determine students' eligibility for free school meals **without distributing, collecting, or processing household applications**. All school districts that operate a federal school meal program are required by federal law to directly certify students living in households that receive CalFresh benefits. California also directly certifies students living in CalWORKs households. **Direct certification utilizes data matching:** schools' student enrollment files are matched against CalFresh and CalWORKs records.

Direct Certification: Step-by-Step



Benefits for Low-Income Students & Families

Direct certification means low-income students are...

- ➔ More likely to be enrolled to receive free school meals.
- ➔ Enrolled to receive free school meals without a redundant household application.
- ➔ More likely to participate in the school meal programs.

Benefits for Schools

Direct certification helps school districts...

- ➔ Increase efficiency by not having to (1) distribute, collect, or process school meal applications for students who are directly certified, or (2) undertake verification for directly certified students.
- ➔ Identify low-income students for the purposes of school meals and LCFF.

Direct Certification in California

During the 2012-13 school year, California directly certified 76% of students living in households that participated in CalFresh. That fell short of the current federal performance standard (90%).

- ➔ California can **improve the state's direct certification rate** by optimizing the process by which data is matched between student enrollment files and CalFresh/CalWORKs records.
- ➔ California can also **make more students eligible for direct certification** by applying for federal authority (via available demonstration projects) to utilize Medi-Cal data in the matching process.

Additional Resources

Direct Certification, California Department of Education:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/directcert.asp>

Enrolling All Children in a Household for Free School Meals, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=3212>

Direct Certification in the Nation School Lunch Program – Impacts on Program Access and Integrity:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan-electronic-publications-from-the-food-assistance-nutrition-research-program/efan03009.aspx#.UtnCa9LTnGI>