

## 2014 State Administrative Agenda: Child Nutrition

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For over two decades, California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) has worked to incubate and advance innovative policy solutions that increase low-income Californians' access to nutritious food. We envision a healthy and food-secure California for all residents. We ask state administrators to join us in this vision and take action in support of California's kids.

### 2014 Administrative Actions

- ➔ Pursue the use of Medi-Cal data for direct certification.
- ➔ Optimize data matching to improve rates of direct certification with CalFresh & CalWORKs.
- ➔ Prepare to publish key findings of the Administrative Review.
- ➔ Tailor the Administrative Review to more fully assess school meal practices & environments.
- ➔ Establish a "fix-it ticket" response to minor sponsor and provider errors within CACFP.

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### Direct Certification with Medi-Cal Data

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released a request for applications for states to participate in demonstration projects that evaluate the use of Medi-Cal (Medicaid) data in directly certifying low-income students for free school meals. Millions of children in California are enrolled in Medi-Cal. Many more will become eligible for Medi-Cal coverage with implementation of the Affordable Care Act. The federal demonstration projects are an opportunity to make more low-income students in California eligible for direct certification. Now is the time to act. State proposals must be submitted to USDA by March 5, 2014.

**Administrative Action:** Respond to the federal request for applications to use Medi-Cal data in directly certifying students for free school meals.

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### Improving California's Direct Certification Rate

California has made a concerted effort to directly certify students from CalFresh and CalWORKs households. More work remains to be done. A recent report from USDA shows that California fell short of the 2012-13 performance standard for direct certification with CalFresh data. California's new Local Control Funding Formula, which relies on the identification of low-income students, such as those participating in CalFresh, makes improving the state's direct certification rate all the more urgent and important. The State can directly certify more eligible students by optimizing the data match between student enrollment files and CalFresh/CalWORKs records.

**Administrative Action:** Optimize the data match between student enrollment files and CalFresh/CalWORKs records to directly certify more eligible students for free school meals.

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### The Administrative Review: Publishing Key Findings

As part of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA), USDA established the new Administrative Review, which streamlines monitoring and compliance tools used by state agencies to evaluate school food authorities. As required by HHFKA, state agencies must now report the final results of Administrative Reviews to the public in an accessible, easily understood manner. California state administrators can improve transparency and collaboration by sharing the key findings of Administrative Reviews in an open format that can, for instance, be retrieved, viewed, downloaded, and searched by commonly used web applications.

**Administrative Action:** Prepare to publish key findings of the Administrative Review in a manner that proactively informs parents, educators, community leaders, policymakers, and other members of the public.

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### Administrative Review: Assessing School Meal Practices & Environments

USDA's materials for the Administrative Review have been developed to support improved, efficient oversight of school nutrition programs and to monitor compliance with new federal regulations. States can also use the Administrative Review to gather information related to state policies or goals. This flexibility presents an opportunity for California state administrators to engage with school food authorities and assess their efforts to improve school food and school food environments.

**Administrative Action:** In 2014-15, tailor the Administrative Review to assess (1) the use of innovative breakfast models, (2) the receipt and outcomes of state start-up and expansion grants for school breakfast, (3) scratch cooking and fresh preparation practices, and (4) the use of behavioral economics.

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### CACFP: A “Fix-It Ticket” Option

The financial resources and nutritional benefits of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) are well established, yet the program does not reach all eligible child care facilities in California. Frequently cited barriers to participation are the program's steep learning curve and severe process of punishment for non-compliance (serious deficiency). This process is a common deterrent for family child care homes, child care centers, and potential sponsoring agencies that might otherwise want to participate in CACFP.

Program integrity is critical. However, under the current system, well-meaning facilities and sponsoring organizations can be terminated from the program for minor errors. The State has the opportunity to expand and sustain CACFP participation by exploring new approaches to a fair, graduated scale of consequence for sponsors and providers.

**Administrative Action:** Establish a “fix-it ticket” option to create a graduated scale of consequences in response to sponsor and provider errors within CACFP.

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