

## 2015 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.

### 2015 Administrative Actions

- Capitalize on existing authority to maximize the benefits of Medi-Cal direct certification.
- Optimize data matching to improve direct certification rates.
- Make findings from Administrative Reviews readily available to the public.
- Support science-based nutrition standards for the federal child nutrition programs.

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### Maximize the Benefits of Medi-Cal Direct Certification

In 2014 California was approved to participate in a demonstration project that will evaluate the use of Medi-Cal (Medicaid) data in directly certifying up to 225,000 low-income students for free school meals starting in the 2014-15 school year. This demonstration project has the potential to increase access to school meals for hundreds of thousands of students now -- and will help make the case for bringing Medi-Cal direct certification to millions of California's kids in the future. Now is the time for decisive, comprehensive action to implement the demonstration project to the fullest extent allowed by federal authority.

**Administrative Action:** Optimize implementation of the Medi-Cal direct certification demonstration project by reaching 225,000 students in the 2014-15 school year and establishing a state-level system for direct certification with Medi-Cal data.

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### Meet the Federal Requirement for Direct Certification Rates

California has made a concerted effort to better connect low-income students with free school meals through direct certification. More work remains to be done. A recent report from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) shows that California fell well below the federal performance standard for direct certification with CalFresh data. As demonstrated in other states and as recommended by USDA, probabilistic matching between student enrollment files and CalFresh/CalWORKs records can improve direct certification outcomes without sacrificing program integrity.

**Administrative Action:** Establish a probabilistic matching system between student enrollment files and CalFresh/CalWORKs records to directly certify at least 95% of categorically eligible students for free school meals.

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### The Administrative Review: Share Key Findings & Results

As required by the 2010 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. State agencies must now ensure the final results of Administrative Reviews are made available to the public in an accessible, easily understood manner. The California Department of Education (CDE) began the first 3-year cycle of reviews in the 2013-14 school year. CDE 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 via commonly used web applications.

**Administrative Action:** Share 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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### Support and Protect Science-Based Nutrition Standards

For many children in California, especially those harmed by hunger and food insecurity, meals served at school and in child care settings are a critical resource – often times being the most nutritious meals a child will receive all day. The nutrition standards for the federal child nutrition programs should be grounded in nutritional science, not driven by politics.

California administrators have expressed strong support for science-based standards, demonstrating that support in local, state, and federal arenas. To best serve the health, well-being, and academic achievement of students across California, state administrators should continue these efforts and, whenever granted the authority, oppose any changes that weaken the standards.

**Administrative Action:** To the fullest extent allowed by federal authority, extend and strengthen the commitment to science-based nutrition standards for all federal child nutrition programs.

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*For more than 20 years, CFPA has been the state's trusted food policy advocacy organization dedicated to increasing low-income Californians' access to healthy food at home, at school, and throughout entire communities. CFPA's advocacy agenda draws on the anti-hunger, nutrition, and health movements. Working as both a policy leader and supportive policy ally, CFPA continues to build on its long history of success.*