Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Direct Certification (DC) User Guide

DPI School Nutrition Team
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Overview

Direct Certification (DC) promotes participation in school meal programs by simplifying access to free and reduced price meals. Children are automatically (categorically) eligible for free or reduced price school meals based on their eligibility as a foster child or based on their households participation in these programs: FoodShare (SNAP), W-2 cash benefits (TANF), Medicaid, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations program (FDPIR).

When a student is directly certified for free meals, the student's family does not need to complete the application for free or reduced-price meals. DC decreases administrative burden for school staff and families while improving the integrity of the certification process, as it establishes eligibility without the completion of an application.

Additional information on DC is available on DPI's DC webpage.

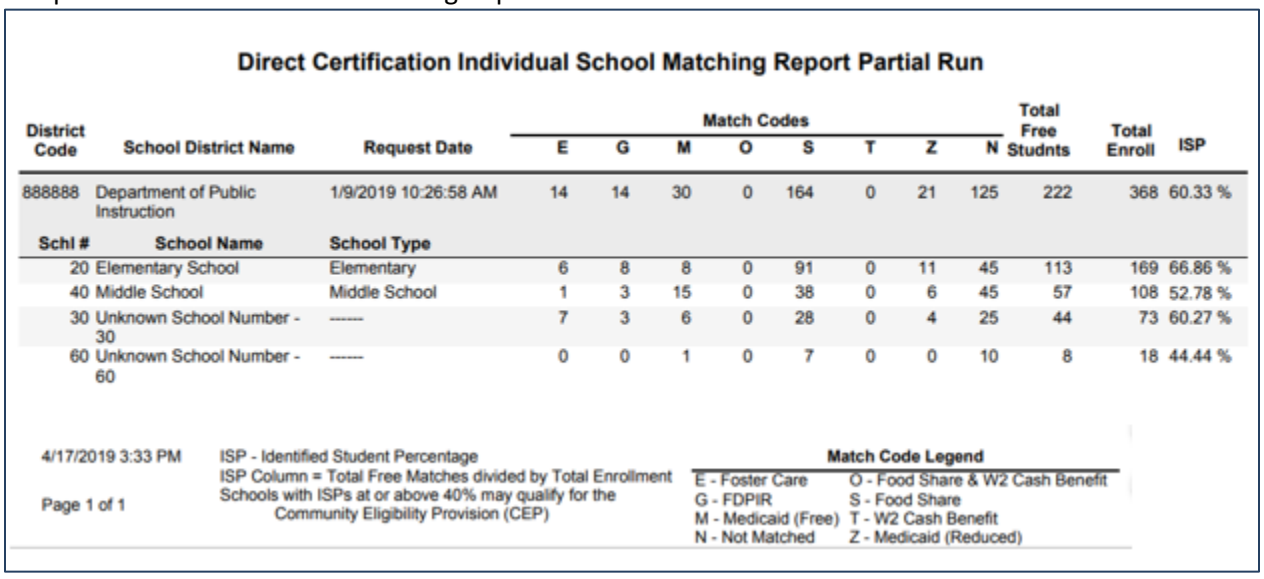
Wisconsin Direct Certification Quick Links

Login to DC Portal
DC Webpage
DC Instructional Webcast
List of School Codes

Individual School Matching Report

This helpful report is available on the left navigation bar, "Ind School Matching RPT". Select the school year and the match request, click the PDF or Excel format option, and click the Generate button. The downloadable file will appear in the lower left of your screen.

Sample DC Individual School Matching Report



Direct Certification Individual School Matching Report Partial Run

District Code	School District Name	Request Date	Match Codes E	G	M	O	S	T	Z	N	Total Free Studnts	Total Enroll	ISP
888888	Department of Public Instruction	1/9/2019 10:26:58 AM	14	14	30	0	164	0	21	125	222	368	60.33 %
Schl #	**School Name**	**School Type**											
20	Elementary School	Elementary	6	8	8	0	91	0	11	45	113	169	66.86 %
40	Middle School	Middle School	1	3	15	0	38	0	6	45	57	108	52.78 %
30	Unknown School Number - 30	------	7	3	6	0	28	0	4	25	44	73	60.27 %
60	Unknown School Number - 60	------	0	0	1	0	7	0	0	10	8	18	44.44 %

4/17/2019 3:33 PM
Page 1 of 1

ISP - Identified Student Percentage
ISP Column = Total Free Matches divided by Total Enrollment
Schools with ISPs at or above 40% may qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Match Code Legend

E - Foster Care	O - Food Share & W2 Cash Benefit
G - FDPIR	S - Food Share
M - Medicaid (Free)	T - W2 Cash Benefit
N - Not Matched	Z - Medicaid (Reduced)

DC Calendar of Requirements and Best Practices

Districts and Private Schools in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
(Includes Non CEP School, Mixed CEP Districts, Provision 2 Base Year)

Required to run full enrollment
- 1st: beginning of year (between second week of July and first day of school)
- 2nd:: three months later (around month of December)
- 3rd: six months after first run (around month of March)
- Between mid-March and April 1 for CEP proxy data

Best practice
- Just before registration to decrease the number of applications that families need to complete
- Just before Verification Process on October 1 – to decrease the number of applications that need to be verified
- Strongly recommend districts mark their calendar to run once per month in order to identify students that begin receiving FoodShare, W-2, or Medicaid benefits during the school year

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Schools – District Wide Participation

Required to run 1 time per year
- During the month of October for the Special Provision Match

Best practice
- Between mid-March and April 1 for CEP proxy data to support Individual Student Percentage (ISP)
- Some districts mark their calendars to run once per month to match students to DC for other programs like Title 1

CEP Schools – Mixed Districts (Group, Individual Participation)

Required to run same as Districts and Private Schools in NSLP (see above)

Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCI) with Day Students
- DC is allowed but not required. Letters do not go out to parents since RCCIs are nonpricing

Special Milk Program Pricing Plan with Free Option only
- DC is allowed but not required. DC notification letters are sent to parents when they qualify for free.
- Since there is no reduced price milk eligibility, students matched with Z code on match file are considered a non-match (N)

Access to DC will not be approved for:
- RCCIs without Day Students
- Special Milk Program Plans that are all free or all pricing

Summary of the Direct Certification Process

DC uses a computer matching system to compare the School Food Authority (SFA) list of students to the list of Wisconsin children enrolled in FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, Medicaid programs, FDPIR or identified through the foster care system. Each SFA can run DC as often as it wants and may be done with a full student enrollment list, with only a few names, or even with just one name, such as when a new student enrolls. The state database is updated every weekend to improve the likelihood of having the most up-to-date information each time an SFA runs DC.

The process is as follows:

1. **Create a student input file** with a list of currently enrolled students (student file creation instructions on page 10). Most SFAs download this report from the Student Information System (SIS)
2. **Log into the Direct Certification Program Portal** (DCP) (see next section).
3. **Upload the student input file.** The DCP matches the student file with a database of children whose households are currently participating in the Wisconsin FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, Medicaid based on income data, FDPIR or who appear in the foster care system database. The match process only takes a few minutes dependent on the number of students uploaded.
4. **Download the completed student match output file**. This file provides a code for each student, which shows whether the student is directly certified for free or reduced price meals and indicates the program matched.
5. **Upload match file** into your SIS according to the software instructions, if applicable.
6. Verify or manually update students for **Extension of Benefits**.
7. **Print/Mail** notification letters to families.

Running an up-to-date student enrollment list before the start of the school year (July-August) reduces the number of paper or online USDA Free and Reduced Price Meal applications. DC, just like determination by application, is good for the remainder of the school year.

Login to the Direct Certification Program (DCP)

Existing DCP Users - Password Recovery or Reset Instructions

If you forget your password, or are locked out of your account from typing your password incorrectly three times, go to https://accounts.dwd.wisconsin.gov/ and follow the account recovery instructions to unlock the username or to obtain a new password. If you are still locked out, contact Department of Children and Families Service Desk at (855)264-6323.

Do not share your DCP account access information with other staff. Each staff member that requires access to DCP should have his/her own username and password. Your username recovery is tied to the email address that you enter, and your profile should be updated when necessary.

If you already have access to the Direct Certification Program, please skip to page 10, *Student File Creation*.

New DCP Users - Requesting First Time Access to the DCP

Use this link to get to the State of Wisconsin DCP: directcert.wisconsin.gov.

1. Click on "Request access to the new Direct Certification system".

State of Wisconsin Direct Certification Program

New Users

If you have not yet accessed direct certification through this website:

1. Click here to Request access to the new direct certification system.
2. Read the Direct Certification Instruction manual.
3. Once your account has been activated use the link below to log in to the direct certification system.

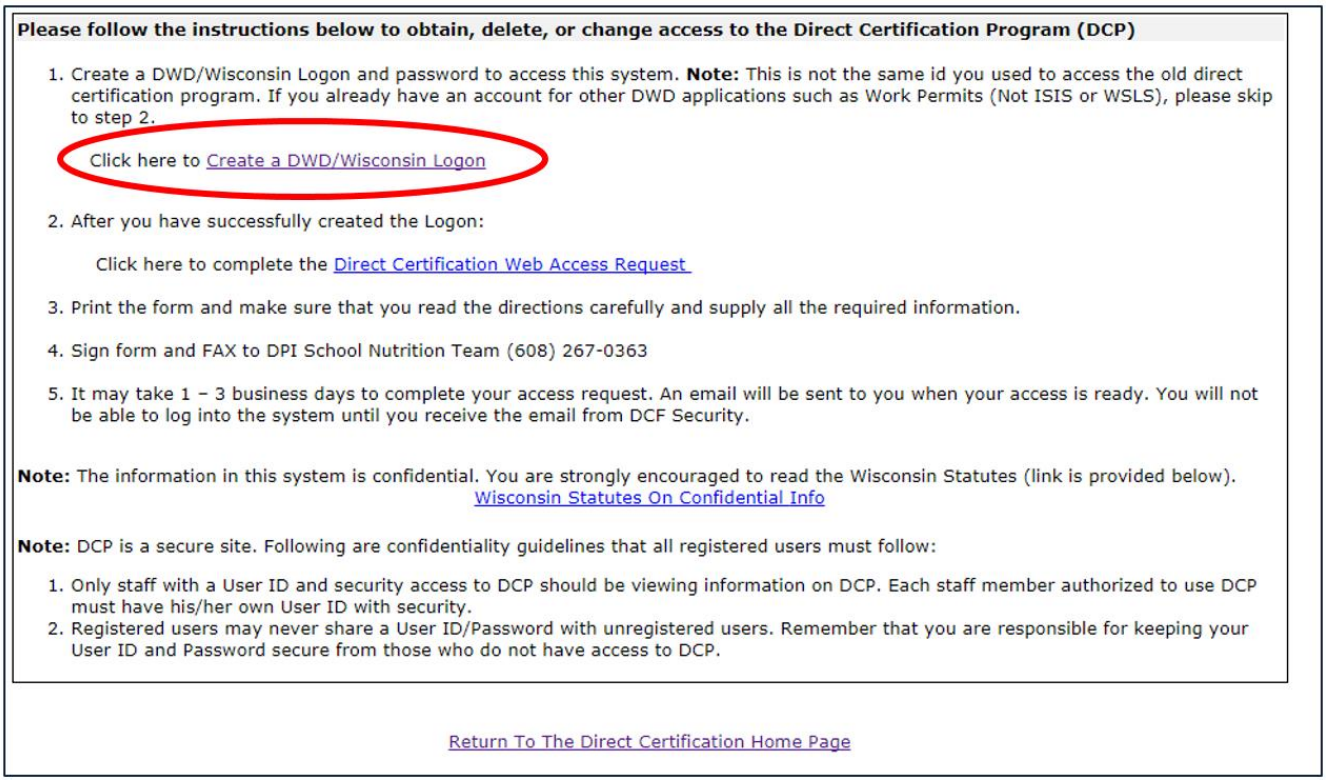
For more information on Direct Certification

- check out the DPI School Nutrition Team Direct Certification web page at http://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/direct-certification

Registered Users

- Click here to log in

2. Click on "Create a DWD/Wisconsin Logon"



Please follow the instructions below to obtain, delete, or change access to the Direct Certification Program (DCP)

1. Create a DWD/Wisconsin Logon and password to access this system. **Note:** This is not the same id you used to access the old direct certification program. If you already have an account for other DWD applications such as Work Permits (Not ISIS or WSLS), please skip to step 2.

   Click here to Create a DWD/Wisconsin Logon

2. After you have successfully created the Logon:

   Click here to complete the Direct Certification Web Access Request

3. Print the form and make sure that you read the directions carefully and supply all the required information.
4. Sign form and FAX to DPI School Nutrition Team (608) 267-0363
5. It may take 1 – 3 business days to complete your access request. An email will be sent to you when your access is ready. You will not be able to log into the system until you receive the email from DCF Security.

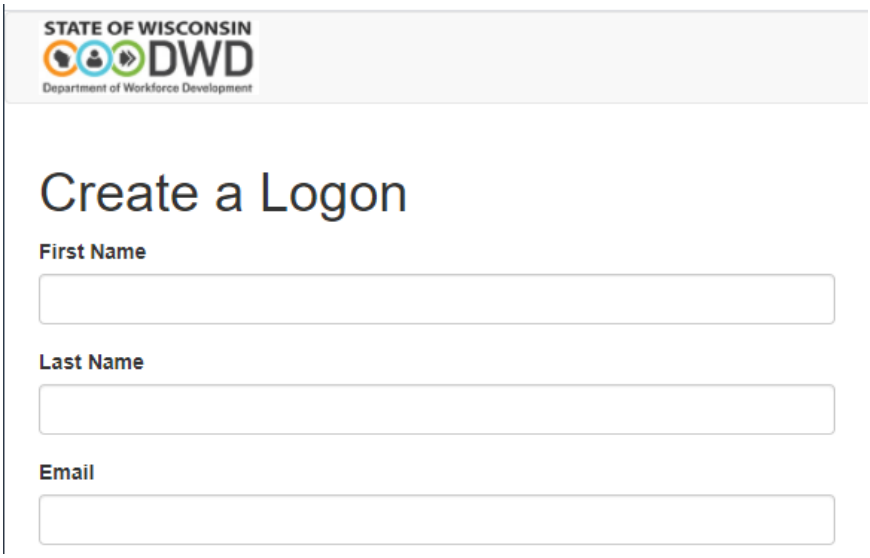
Note: The information in this system is confidential. You are strongly encouraged to read the Wisconsin Statutes (link is provided below).
Wisconsin Statutes On Confidential Info

Note: DCP is a secure site. Following are confidentiality guidelines that all registered users must follow:

1. Only staff with a User ID and security access to DCP should be viewing information on DCP. Each staff member authorized to use DCP must have his/her own User ID with security.
2. Registered users may never share a User ID/Password with unregistered users. Remember that you are responsible for keeping your User ID and Password secure from those who do not have access to DCP.

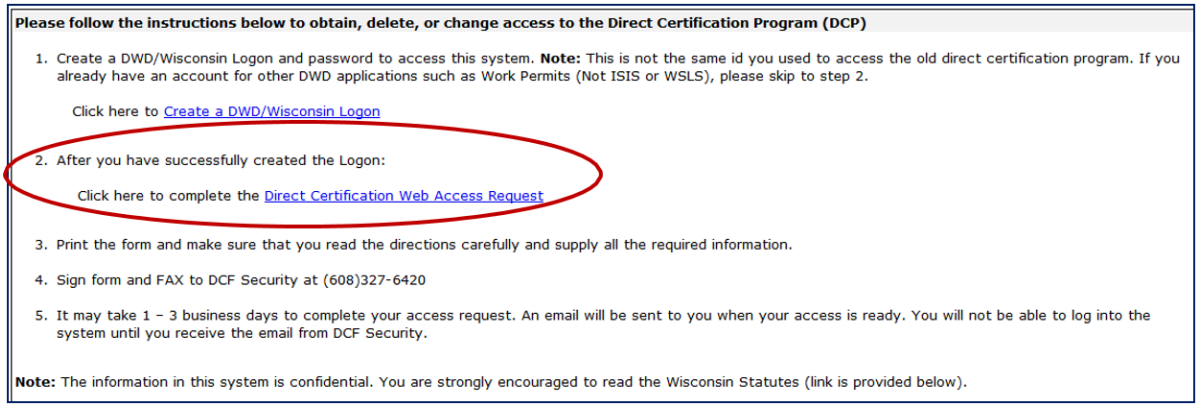
Return To The Direct Certification Home Page

3. Complete this online form to create your username and password.



Be sure to note the Username you've created. You will use the Username to complete the next step: completing a DCP Web Access Request form.

4. After you have successfully created the DWD Wisconsin Logon, complete Step 2 on the Account Creation webpage by completing the Direct Certification Web Access Request Form, DPI Form PI-6014 found at DPI Files and Forms.



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
DIRECT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM (DCP)
WEB ACCESS REQUEST
PI-6014 (Rev. 07-16)

INSTRUCTIONS: Return completed form to:
DPI CHILD NUTRITION TEAMS
Fax: 608-267-0363
OR
Scan and email to: dpifns@dpi.wi.gov

Allow three (3) business days to complete your access request. An email will be sent to you from Department of Children and Families (DCF) when your access is ready. You will not be able to log into the system until you receive the email from DCF security.

Contact the DPI Child Nutrition Teams at dpifns@dpi.wi.gov with questions.

Use of this form: The department is legally responsible for protecting the confidentiality of personally identifiable information. Personal information you provide may be used for secondary purposes (Privacy Law s. 15.04(1)(m), Wis. Stats.)

All information is required and all fields must be completed.

	GENERAL INFORMATION	
User ID *From DWD/Wisconsin Account Creation Screen* https://www.dwd.state.wi.us/AccountManagement/Default.aspx		Name of User *Last, First, MI*
User's Email Address		User's Daytime Telephone *Area Code/No.*
Mother's Maiden Name		Agency Code *Contact DPI if unknown*
District, Private School, or Agency Name		
City		County
Supervisor's Name *First and Last*		Supervisor's Daytime Telephone *Area Code/No.*

	SIGNATURES	
Use of this logon and password provides access to confidential information, which must be safeguarded in accordance with Wisconsin Statutes. The user's signature on this form constitutes acceptance of responsibility for compliance with s. 49.32(10)10m), s. 49.81, s. 49.83, and s. 943.70(2) and with DWD policy (attached to new logon approvals).		
Signature of User		Date Signed *Mo./Day/Yr.*
Signature of Supervisor		Date Signed *Mo./Day/Yr.*

DPI Form PI-6014 DCP Web Access Request Form
The User ID is the username that you just set up in the DWD/Wisconsin Logon.

For the "User's Email Address", provide your email address. Write your email address legibly, as this is how you will receive DC access notification from the Department of Children and Families Service Desk.
Email this form to dpifns@dpi.wi.gov or fax to 608-267-0363.

If you do not receive an email after three days indicating your web access is ready, please contact the DPI School Nutrition Team at dpifns@dpi.wi.gov.

Student Input File Creation

Whether you use SIS software or manually create your own file, the file uploaded to the DCP must be a **"tab delimited text" (.txt)** file. Microsoft Excel is a common way to create a tab delimited file, but you can use any text editing software that can save the file as a "tab delimited text" (.txt) file. Most SIS packages that are used by SFAs to manage student information have reports set up to help create the student input file needed for DC information.

Student Input File Layout

The DCP requires the student file be in a **tab delimited** format and contain the following information:

Last Name: Character data (up to 20 characters)

First Name: Character data (up to 15 characters)

Middle Initial: Character data (up to 1 character or leave column/tab blank)

Date of Birth: Required date format (MM/DD/YYYY)

School Use: Character data (enter any information up to 28 characters or leave blank)

School Code*: Numerical data (up to 4 digits; this is different from your agency code)

School Code* – This is different from your 5 or 6 digit agency code. If you are not sure what your school code(s) are, please look up your school code on our website: dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/direct-certification under "DC Process – About the DC Student Input File".

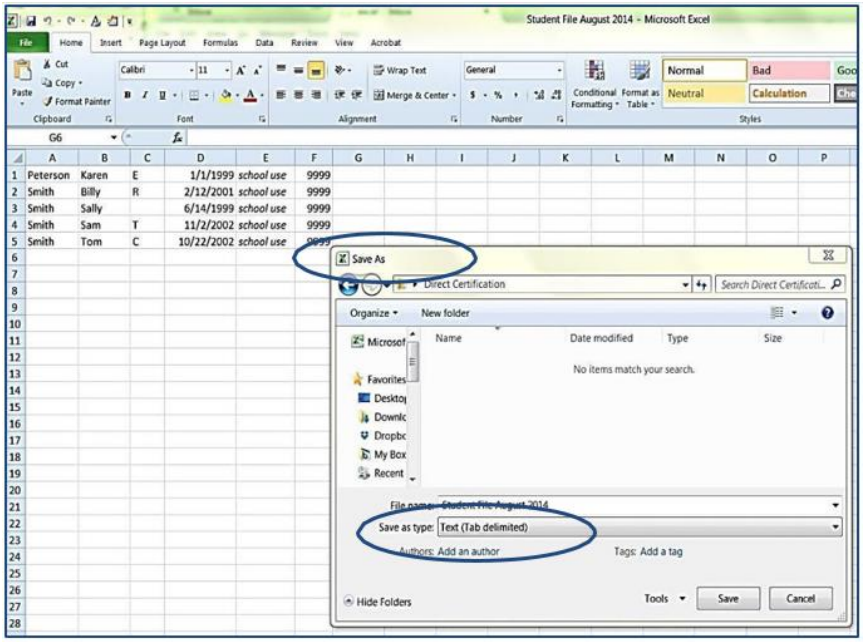
Creating the Student File with Microsoft Excel

- Make sure the information is entered in columns in this order:

	Last Name	First	Middle Initial	Date of Birth	School Use	School Code
	A	B	C	D	E	**F**
Row 1	**Adamson**	**Edward**	**B (may leave column blank)**	**11/13/2006**	**Southside (may leave column**	**0040**

- Once the student data is entered, delete all headers if there are any.
- On the top menu, click on "File", and then "Save As".
- In the "Save as type" box select: Text (Tab delimited) (.txt).

The file will look like this when using "**Save As**" in Excel:



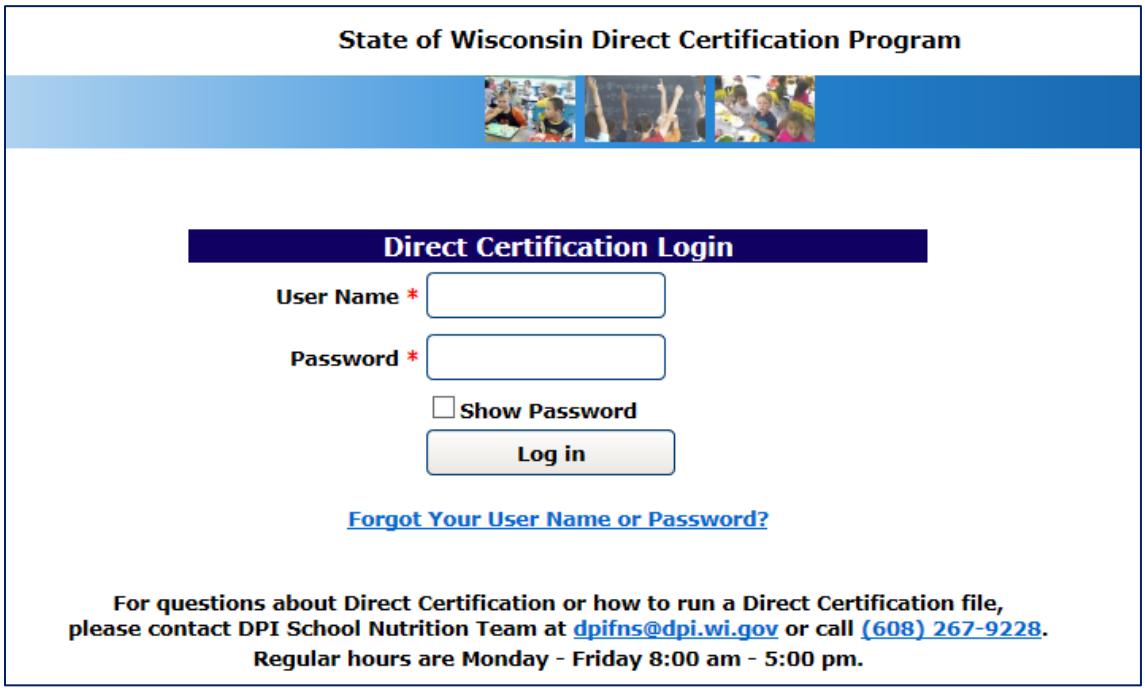
You can save the file with any name – establish a systematic way to name files – to any location on your computer. Consider an electronic folder named Direct Certification. Be sure to note the file name and folder location so you can find it when you want to upload it.

Write down your folder name and file naming system.

Folder name_____ File name _____

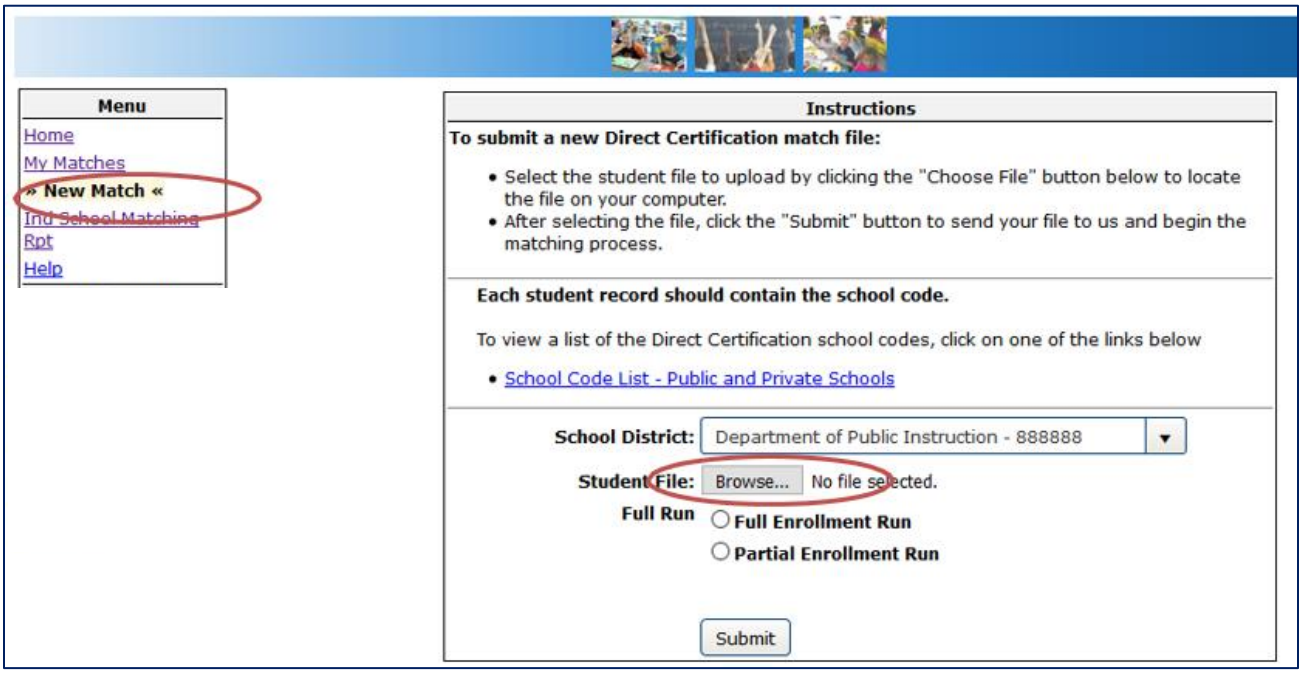
Uploading the Student File

1. Log into the DCP Portal.



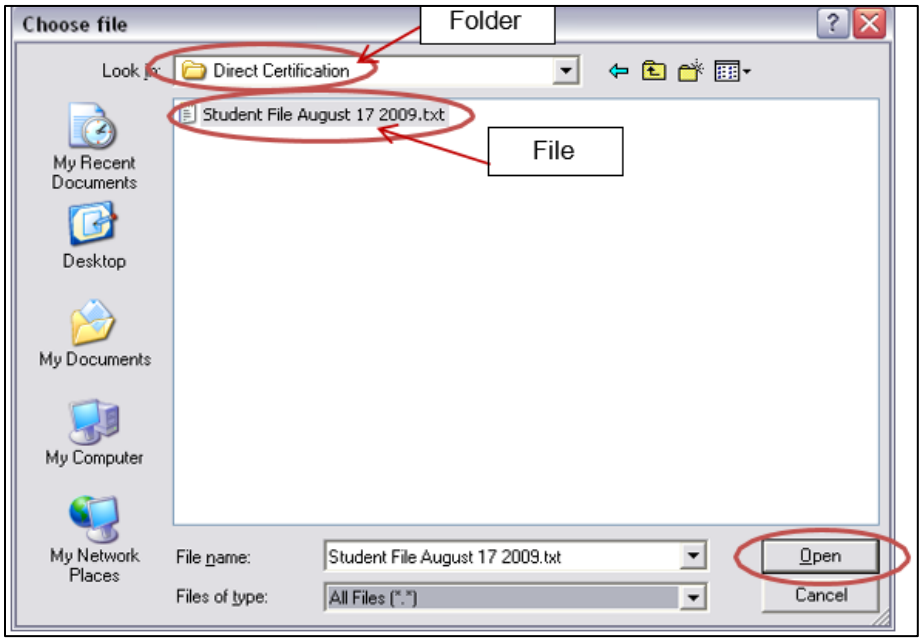
2. On the left navigation bar, click on "New Match"

3. Click on the "Browse" button.



A file dialog box (pictured below) will open to **locate the student file** you want to upload to match for eligibility. **Browse** to where you saved your file on your computer. In this example, the person who made the student file created a folder called "Direct Certification."

4. After locating the file, **click the "Open" button** on the file dialog box.



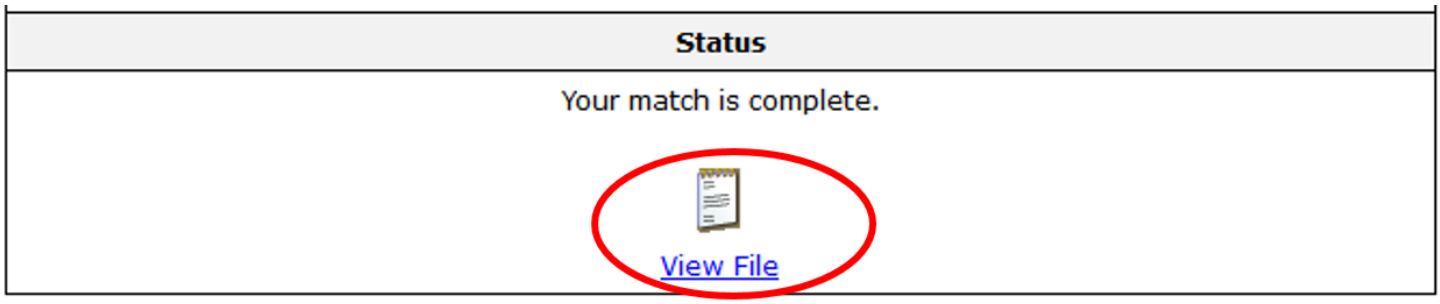
5. Click "Full Enrollment Run" or "Partial Enrollment Run".
6. Click Submit Button

During the matching process, your computer screen may show zero percent (0%) processing for a short time; don't worry, the system is working! Then you may see a spinning wheel. Allow it to finish.

Number of Students	Approximate Time to Process File
<1,000	**1 minute**
1,001 - 10,000	**2 minutes**
10,001 - 40,000	**3 minutes**
Milwaukee Public Schools	**12 minutes**

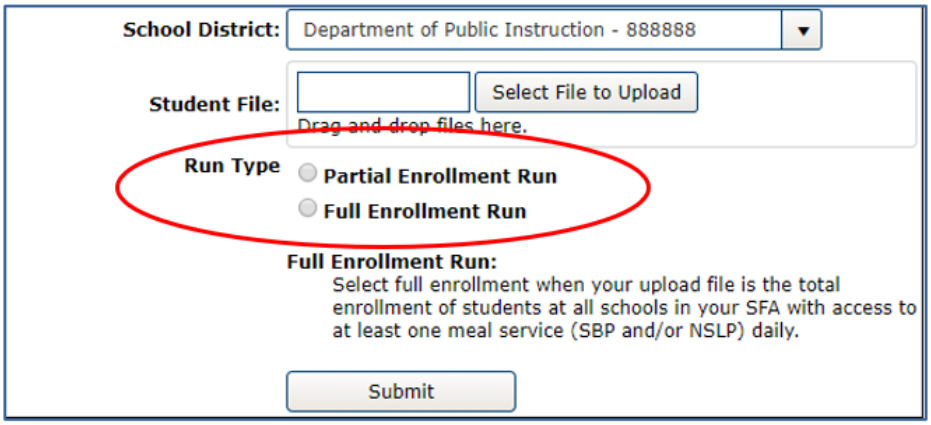
Once the match process is complete, the webpage will automatically refresh and display a link to view and download the match file.

If the system automatically logged out, log in again, and on the left navigation bar, click on "My Matches" to view your student match output file.



7. You must download and save student match output files to your computer. Match files are deleted from the DCP after 14 days.

About Full Enrollment Run versus Partial Enrollment Run



Select "Full Enrollment Run" ONLY when the DC student input file is a list of all the students in your district or School Food Authority (SFA) with access to at least one meal service (lunch and/or breakfast).

- A SFA with mixed Community Eligibility Provision schools should include all CEP and non-CEP students in the DC student input file.

All other student input files are "Partial Enrollment Run".

Allowable use of Direct Certification

- A public school district should run students on behalf of a private school *only* if the private school is listed as part of an Alternate SFA Agreement on the DPI School Nutrition Contract.
  - Select "Full Enrollment Run"
- A public school district is allowed to run on behalf of the schools in their district that do not participate in Child Nutrition Programs.
  - Select "Partial Enrollment Run"
- A district is allowed to run Pre-K and Daycare students that are enrolled but do not have access to meals or milk
  - Select "Partial Enrollment Run"

Unallowable use of Direct Certification

- SFAs must not include students that are not enrolled in their SFA. This includes students open enrolled out of the district, homeschooled students, students who are too young to enroll, or students who attend private schools.
- SFAs must not run Direct Certification on behalf of other districts.

Troubleshooting

If you submit your student file and receive an error message, check for these problems:

- **File not saved in tab delimited format**. Whether you use special software or create your own file, the file to be uploaded to the DCP must be a **"tab delimited text" (.txt)** file.
- **Missing column**. Check that the student file has all the appropriate columns (Last Name, FirstName, Middle Initial, Date of Birth, School Use, and School Code). Remember Middle Initial and School Use, columns can be left blank, but you must still have a column in place for these fields.
- **Headers**. Be sure to delete all headers before saving as a tab delimited file. Row 1 should begin with

student's last name.

- **Error message "Your student input file contains an unknown school code."** Check that all students included in your student input file are enrolled in your SFA and have the school code of the site they attend in column F.
- **Error message "The district enrollment differs from site enrollment data by 5% or more."** Direct Certification has an edit check to ensure that all enrolled students with access to a meal are included in a full enrollment run. At the beginning of the school year, the system validates enrollment against the total number of students under each site that were included in the first enrollment run. In February, the edit check is updated with the enrollment data from the Enrollment and Participation Report which is based on the October meal reimbursement claim. If you receive this error, please email dpifns@dpi.wi.gov with what the correct enrollment is and an explanation for the difference.

The Student Output Match File

Saving the Match File

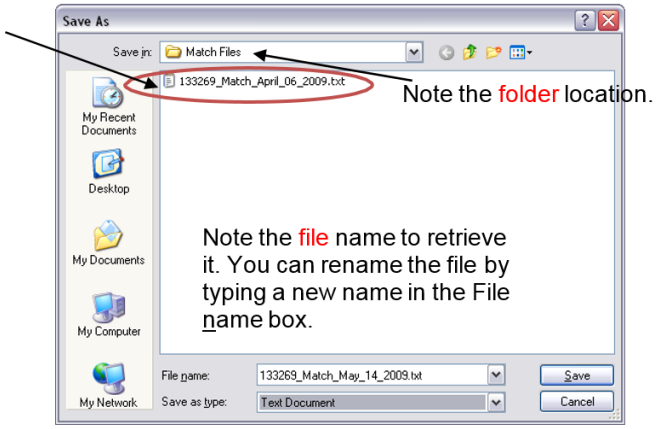
It is very important to save the match file in a secure place on a computer. These files are as important as approved Free and Reduced Price Meal applications because they are your proof of eligibility.

You are required to keep your match files for a minimum of three years plus the current school year.

8. To download your file **click on the "Download File" link** for the file you want to save. When you click the "Download" link a file download dialog box will open.

9. **Click the** "**Save"** button and use the file save dialog to select the place on your computer where you wish to save the file.

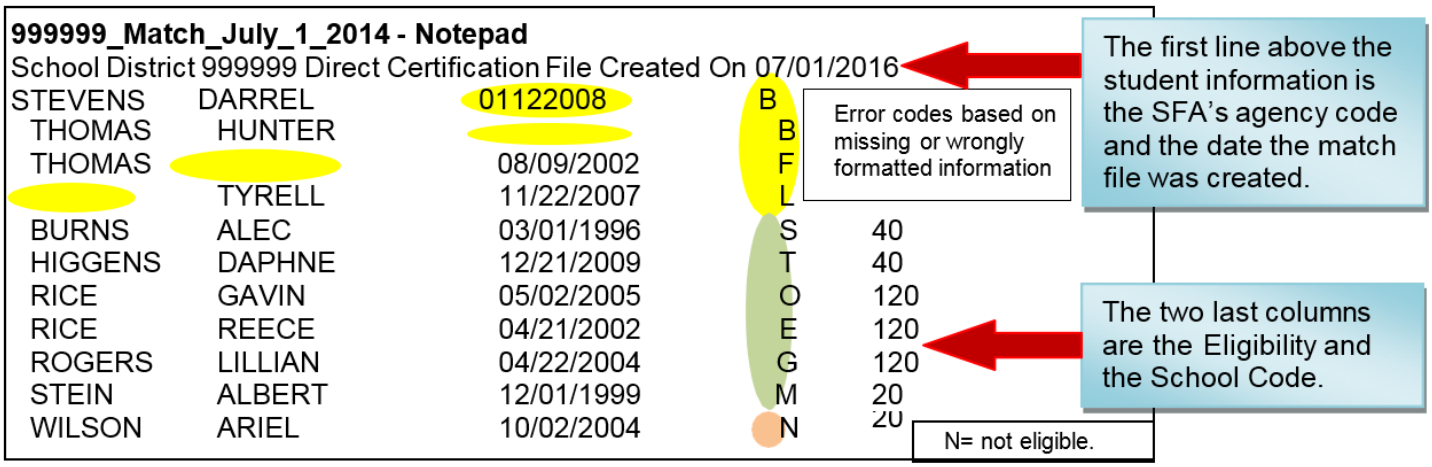
By default, **the DCP system names the file** with your school district agency code and the month, date, and year the file was matched.



Match File Layout

The match file you download is in the same tab delimited layout as the student file with the addition of an eligibility or error code.

The match file is always returned in a Notepad (.txt) file format. You may save it in another format (e.g., Microsoft Excel), but you must save a copy of the match file in the Notepad format in which it was received. Below is an example of the match file in the Notepad format as received from the DCP:



This example does not contain actual names, birth dates or school information.

Notepad data is not typically aligned in columns like shown above. You can open a Notepad file in Excel to see the proper column alignment.

Eligibility Codes and Error Codes

Each student record will have one of 12 codes: 8 are eligibility and 4 are errors.

	Code	Description
ELIGIBILITY	S	Eligible. The child matched with FoodShare (SNAP) information and is automatically eligible for free meals.
	T	Eligible. The child matched with W-2 cash benefits information and is automatically eligible for free meals.
	O	Eligible. The child matched with both FoodShare and W-2 cash benefits information and is automatically eligible for free meals. (On the Verification Collection Report, this student will be reported certified based on FoodShare).
	E	Eligible. Foster child matched with the state foster care system database and is automatically eligible for free meals.
	G	Eligible. The child matched with Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and is automatically eligibility for FREE meals.
	M	Eligible. The child matched with Medicaid and is automatically eligible for FREE meals.
	Z	Eligible. The child matched with Medicaid and is automatically eligible for REDUCED meals.
	N	Not eligible. The student is not a match in the database or is in a closed or ineligible case.
ERROR	B	Incorrectly formatted or missing birth date
	F	Incorrectly formatted or missing first name
	L	Incorrectly formatted or missing last name
	###	More than one error

For these error codes, correct the data and rerun the list, or enter the missing information and re-run those students.

Ineligible Students

Children's households can be enrolled in FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, Medicaid or FDPIR throughout the year, so it is possible that a student who does not match on a given DC run may become eligible and match in DC runs later in the year. The DCP database is updated every weekend. DC may be run with a full student enrollment list or may be run with only a few names or even one name (such as when a new student enrolls).

If a household completes an application with a case number and a program name of FoodShare or W-2 cash benefits for a student with an ineligible status in DC, the application should be approved if it contains all the required information. SFAs may choose to verify these applications for cause if they think the information provided is inaccurate.

If an application includes a case number and the household has made a note that the case number is for Medicaid or Badger Care, these case numbers cannot be approved on a paper application. Medicaid eligibility is only identified through DC since not all Medicaid participants qualify for free or reduced price meals.

More About Medicaid

The Department of Public Instruction School Nutrition Team (SNT) applied for and has been awarded the opportunity to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) demonstration project to evaluate direct certification for free and reduced price school meals using Medicaid data along with income. Medicaid data will be used to directly certify students for both **free and reduced price** meal eligibility.

School enrollment data will be matched with Medicaid eligibility data to identify children who receive Medicaid, or live with a child who receives Medicaid, and whose family income, before expenses and deductions, does not exceed:

- 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for free school meal eligibility; or
- 185 percent of the FPL for reduced price meal eligibility.

Eligible children identified through this matching process are certified automatically to receive free or reduced price school meal benefits without requiring the household to submit an application.

If a student is eligible for reduced price meal benefits and this student's household submits a paper application which qualifies the student for free benefits, the paper application would take precedence, and the student receives the free benefit. The student always receives the "best benefit".

Please note, some Medicaid recipients have household income that is above the free and reduced school meal program eligibility criteria. The only allowable way to certify a student for free or reduced price meals through Medicaid is by a DC match. A Medicaid or Badger care case number on a paper application cannot be accepted to determine meal eligibility.

More About Federal Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Participant data from FDPIR agencies will identify members of households receiving assistance under FDPIR and be included in the direct certification process. Only FDPIR agencies that the SNT has an agreement with will be included in the DC matching process.

Notification of Direct Certification

The next step in the process is to send a letter to the households of directly certified students (those matched as S, T, O, E, G, M, or Z) informing them that the students are automatically eligible for free or reduced price meals. You can use this link to view a letter template on the DPI DC webpage.

Letters are required to include the following:

- ✓ The name(s) of the eligible student(s)
- ✓ Space to list additional students in FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, Medicaid, or FDPIR households who were not directly certified
- ✓ A sentence clearly indicating that they do not need to fill out a paper application
- ✓ Information about how to opt out of receiving free meals
- ✓ School contact information if the parent(s)/guardian(s) has questions
- ✓ The entire USDA non-discrimination statement must be included in all written communication to households regarding the school meals program(s)

Household Categorical Eligibility

When households receive a letter informing them that one or more of their children have been directly certified, the parent/guardian may ask about the status of other children in the household. Schools are required to extend eligibility to other eligible students/siblings in the household (except for Foster Children matched with an "E" code).

If a student qualifies for free or reduced meal benefits via direct certification with an S, T, O, G, M, or Z code, the Determining Official should extend eligibility for free or reduced meals to all students in the household. These children are also considered directly certified and are counted in those categories on the Verification Collection Report. You may be able to use enrollment records to determine additional children who are part of the household but were not identified through DC.

Be sure to document these and other steps you took to determine that household members were categorically eligible for DC.

Wisconsin Direct Certification Resources and Contact Information

Direct Certification Login

SNT Direct Certification Webpage

Questions? Please contact the DPI School Nutrition Team
Email: dpifns@dpi.wi.gov; Phone: 608-267-9228

Direct Certification (DC) FAQs

Direct Certification matches on these benefits:

Code on DC match	Program Name
O or S	FoodShare (Wisconsin's SNAP program)
T	W-2 Cash Benefits (Wisconsin's TANF program)
G	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
M	Medicaid – Free
Z	Medicaid – Reduced Price
E	Foster - Free, but does not extend to others in household

Please refer to the most recent USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals, which is posted on the Direct Certification webpage for more information on direct certification and meal benefit eligibility.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. ***What if I am a new Direct Certification Program (DCP) User?***

   A new user for the DCP is required to create a login and password and submit a Request for Access form to DPI. Please refer to the DC User Guide, under New Users. Do not share DCP user names and passwords with co-workers. Note: DPI should be notified when there are staff that no longer need access to the DCP so they can be disabled.

2. ***When should we complete our first DC run?***

   Running DC *before* you distribute school meal applications for the upcoming school year saves time and effort for you and families. You can run DC beginning the second week of July, even if your school enrollment process is not complete.

   DPI requires a full enrollment run close to the first day of school for reporting purposes.

   DC TIP: Running DC prior to the start of the school year will allow you to claim eligible students (those that match as an S, T, O, G, M, Z or E) beginning the first day of the school year. This is especially helpful for new students without carry over, since free or reduced price meals may only be claimed from the application approval or DC date.

   Exceptions for Provision Schools: Districts and private schools that do not use school meal applications (e.g., Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) district wide, Special Provision schools) are required to complete the first run during the month of October for DPI reporting purposes.

3. ***How often should I run DC?***

   You may run DC as often as you like and frequent runs are encouraged. Schools that collect meal applications are required to run DC at least three times during the school year: 1) at or around the beginning of the school year, 2) three months after the first run, and 3) six months after the

first run. Running DC more often will help you use the process efficiently, make sure newly eligible students have access to meal benefits, and reduce paperwork all year.

DC TIP: In addition to the three mandated times, run DC right before October 1, when your pool of applications for verification is determined. Since directly certified students are eligible for free or reduced price meals without an application, they do not need to be included in the verification sample in October, which means fewer applications to verify.

Mark your calendar to complete a Full Enrollment Run right before April 1 for purposes of determining your SFA's eligibility for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

Exceptions for Provision Schools: Provision districts and schools are required to run DC during the month of October and April.

Note: Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs) without day students and Special Milk Programs that do not collect meal applications do not need to run enrollment files and do not need access to the DC.

4. ***I run direct certification often and always put my downloaded match file from the state's DCP into my school's software program. Should I be saving a copy of the match file before uploading it into my software program? Do I really need to save the file after every match I complete?***

   Yes, the match file should be downloaded and saved each time you run direct certification. It is very important to save the match file in a secure place. These files are as important as approved applications because they are your proof of eligibility. When the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) School Nutrition Team (SNT) conducts your Administrative Review (AR), the consultant will ask to see the original match file. If the original file is not available, your School Food Authority (SFA) will be cited, and corrective action will be required. There is also the potential for fiscal action, depending on the specific situation.

   The match output file from the DCP is in a "tab delimited text" (.txt) file format and the original match file should be saved to your computer. After you've saved the original match file, you can save it again in a different format, like Excel or any other software program you are using. You may also print the match files out and save them as a hard copy. It is important to save the file soon after you run DC, as match files are only available for download on the DCP for 14 days. Per record retention requirements, SFAs are required to retain DC records for 3 years plus the current year.

   DC TIP: Create a direct certification folder on your computer to store all electronic DC files and/or create a file folder to house all DC documents. This will be especially beneficial during your SFA's AR, as you will have quick access to any DC documentation that is requested.

5. ***Once we find out that students are eligible for free or reduced price meals via DC, are they eligible as of that day or can we back date to the start of school or first day of that month?***

   Approvals may not be backdated. For directly certified students, the approval date is the run date listed at the top of the matched list. If you receive notification that a student is a member of a

matched student's household, you must use the date that you received this notification as the approval date. Be sure to keep documentation of all original DC matched lists before they are uploaded into any software program at your district. As with applications, once students are directly certified, they remain eligible for free or reduced price meals through the end of the school year and up to 30 operating days into the next school year, or until a new eligibility determination is made.

6. ***A student who matches via DC also has an application submitted. Which one do I use?***

   DC overrides an application*. Even if the family completes an application, all students who match through DC, and students with the extended benefits should be noted as "directly certified" in your student database. You would also report these students as being *directly certified* when the online Verification Collection Report is completed. Keep the application on-site in a separate place; it should not be thrown away. File it with the SFA and follow record retention timeframes as required.

   **Exception: Medicaid code "Z" (Reduced) on direct certification* - if an application is approved free, then provide the greatest benefit to the student. Note that the application is kept with the other applications that can be selected for verification.

7. ***Can I just submit the names of the new students during the year, or must I send my entire enrollment again?***

   Yes, you can just submit a short run of new students, be sure to select the Partial Run button in DCP. But you should also still periodically run a list containing students who did not match in previous runs, as children frequently get signed up for FoodShare, W-2 Cash Benefits, FDPIR, or Medicaid throughout the year. Be sure to select "Partial Run" in the DCP.

8. ***There is an Enrollment button to select when I run a file in DCP. Which do I select – Full Enrollment Run or Partial Enrollment Run?***

   The "Full Enrollment Run" button in DCP should be selected only when your input file includes all students enrolled in your district or SFA with access to lunch and/or breakfast. This includes Special Provision sites, like Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and Provision 2 (P2). Your selection of Full or Partial Run indicates to DPI which of the output files will be reviewed. DPI will review three Full Enrollment Runs for reporting purposes (see question 3).

   Select "Partial Enrollment Run" if your upload file does not include all enrolled students or includes students without access to lunch and/or breakfast.

   What is a Partial Enrollment Run? Some districts like to break up their students by buildings, some only run the students that have not previously matched, and some like to run just the one new student that enrolled that week – these are all "Partial Runs". Note: If your district or SFA includes schools that do not participate in Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs) and they are listed on your Online Contract as "Not In Program", you are allowed to run those students through DCP, but be sure to select "Partial Enrollment Run". This will insure DPI reviews accurate reports.

Important: Districts may not run students who are open enrolled in other districts. Districts may not run students that are enrolled in private schools (unless the district lists the school on their child nutrition contract as part of an Alternate School Food Authority Agreement or CESA).

9. ***I know that free or reduced price meal eligibility can be extended to students who were not identified as directly certified, but are part of a household that is matched by DC through FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, FDPIR or Medicaid. Are students in households of foster children also categorically eligible for free meals benefits?***

   No, effective October 1, 2010, children formally placed in foster care are categorically eligible for free meals. However, having a foster child reside in a household *does not automatically extend benefits* to all children in the same manner as participation in FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, FDPIR or Medicaid matched on DC. Benefits cannot be extended to students in households of foster children.

10. ***What if I have summer school in July or August? What is my 30 day carry over period?***

    The 30 operating (school) day carry over period begins on the school's first day of the school year, even if there are summer school days between July 1 and the first day of the regular school day. Any new benefit eligibility determinations made during the summer do not go into effect until the first day of the new school year.

11. ***What about incoming Pre-K/4K students with other household members in the carryover of benefits period, are they extended benefits during the carry over?***

    Yes, any household members of students in the carry over period may be extended meal benefits from the previous school year. Note: meal benefits given to a student by Foster eligibility are not extended to other household members.

12. ***Students in a household have free benefits from prior school year. They are still in the carry over period, and none have matched on DC yet. Then one shows up on a DC match run with a Z code (meaning reduced price meal benefits). Can I wait until the end of carry over period before switching all household member from free to reduced price?***

    No, anytime a household student is matched on DC or application determined, the new determination ends the carry over status. Remember, the N code in DCP is not considered a new determination until the end of the 30 day carry over.

13. ***Our school/district has students who qualify for free or reduced meal benefits via direct certification but other children "in the same family" didn't get a free or reduced price match code. How can that be possible?***

    If a student qualifies for free or reduced price meal benefits via direct certification with an S, T, O, G, M, or Z code, the Determining Official should extend eligibility for free or reduced price meals to all students in the household. These children are also considered directly certified.

    Siblings may be 'N' on the direct certification list; possibly they weren't listed on the FoodShare, W-

2 cash benefits, FDPIR, or Medicaid account, or perhaps there was a misspelling of that student's name in the state system.

While there is continual work to improve the direct certification system and make it as accurate as possible, technology is not always perfect. Safeguards are in place, like extending of eligibility for household members. Students in eligible households that show up as an 'N' on the DC list can be extended free or reduced eligibility from a household member; just be sure to document how you determined they were eligible. Date and initial each update. The Determining Official may be able to use school enrollment records to extend benefits to additional children who are part of a household.

DC TIP: Set up additional match codes to indicate in your records when a student is a DC match by extension.

Note: Students matched on the DC run with an "E" code do not extend benefits to other household members, as the "E" code is for "Foster child".

Send out the current school year's *Direct Certification Notification letter* or consider contacting the parent or guardian to clarify specific names of children in their household.

14. ***I have a family who submitted an application for school meals with a case number; however, the students showed up as 'N' on the direct certification list. Can you shed some light on this issue?***

    There are many reasons why these students may have shown up as an 'N' on the direct certification run.

    - It is possible that the particular household is on FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits or FDPIR, but the child on your roster is not listed on the qualifying account.
    - There may have been a misspelling of a student's name in the state system so that student was missed.

    Regardless, as long as any household member is receiving FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits or FDPIR with a valid case number, you should take their application at face value and indicate they are eligible for free meal benefits. In Wisconsin, FoodShare and W-2 cash benefits case numbers are ten digits in length. FDPIR numbers vary in length, so they must be confirmed with the tribal agency.

    The school should contact the household for further clarification. If the LEA still considers the application to be questionable, they should "verify for cause" per the Eligibility Manual.
    Note: Medicaid may only provide benefits to a household through DC but not on an application.

15. ***We do not have any foster children at our school and only one family that receives FoodShare or W-2 cash benefits. This seems like a lot of work to do just for one family. Do we have to do DC?***

    Yes, running DC is a federal requirement for all schools participating in the School Meal Programs. In addition to the requirement to run DC at least three times during the school year, families enrolled in eligible programs may not realize their children are also eligible for free or reduced meals

at school or may not feel comfortable applying. DC can help ensure all children eligible for free or reduced price meals can receive them.

16. ***If we have a student whose parents are divorced or separated, but share joint physical custody, do we have to notify both households of the student's eligibility for free or reduced meals?***

    Yes, these situations should be handled in the same manner that the school notifies both parents about student grades, etc. The DC notification letter also gives both households the opportunity to identify if there are any other children living in either household that would then be eligible for free or reduced price meals based on extension of benefits.

    TIP: There is a letter template called "Joint custody" on the DPI Free and Reduced Price Meals webpage you may use to communicate to the other joint household. The DC notification letters do not indicate the basis of the eligibility.

17. ***What if one parent wants to refuse the benefits in the situation described above?***

    This parent would only be able to decline the benefits of free or reduced price meals for this student when the student was actually residing with him/her and would need to provide the school with a schedule. Then the school would be able to correctly claim the child as paid when residing with this parent and free or reduced when residing with the other parent. Make sure to always get a request to decline meal benefits in writing and maintain that documentation with your other program records. A custodial parent may decline the benefits if they are the payor for the child's account or for the time the child resides with them, and they are paying for the child's meals.

    TIP: The meal benefit may be reinstated any time during the rest of the eligibility school year and up to 30 operating days into the next school year.

18. ***What is the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)? How do I participate? And what does this have to do with direct certification?***

    The CEP is a 4-year reimbursement option for eligible schools participating in both the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) that wish to offer free school meals to all children in high poverty schools without collecting household applications. It is intended to improve access to free school meals in eligible schools. Instead of collecting meal applications, schools use data from the Direct Certification run (as well as other students eligible for free meals without a Free and Reduced Meal Application). A multiplier factor is applied, which is intended to estimate the number of free and reduced price meals that would have been served if applications were collected. The difference between the free claiming percentage and 100 percent represents the paid claiming percentage.

    For further information please visit DPI's Community Eligibility webpage where you will find helpful material on this provision.

    CEP district wide schools are only required to run a full enrollment in October and at the beginning of April. Districts that have some schools in CEP and some schools not in CEP, should do three

required runs. Full Enrollment Runs are files that include all students in the district (from CEP and Non CEP schools).

19. I have a student that was appointed to Kinship Care by the state. Is this considered a foster child? Is this student categorically (automatically) eligible for free meals?

Effective October 1, 2010, children formally placed in foster care are categorically (automatically) eligible for free meals. A foster child is one whose care and placement is the responsibility of the State, or who is formally placed by a court with a caretaker household through which the **State retains legal custody** of the child.

Informal arrangements among relatives, such as Kinship, do not automatically qualify a child for free meals. A child may still be considered a foster child if placed with relatives, provided the placement is made by the State or local foster care system or courts. In order to be considered categorically eligible for free meals, the State must retain legal custody of the child.

Children that show up as "E" codes on your direct certification match list are foster children matched with the State foster care system database, and they are automatically eligible for free meals without any further paperwork. Determinations may also be made by appropriate documentation from the State (or county) child welfare agency or a court, or by having the household complete an application.

20. I have a family that was notified their child was qualified for free or reduced price lunch via direct certification, but they say they have never applied for the eligible programs and they want their name off the list. What should I do in this situation?

It is likely that the child has the same (or similar) name and date of birth (DOB) as another student in Wisconsin that is receiving FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, FDPIR or Medicaid benefits or is identified as a foster child. The DCP cannot distinguish a difference between two students with the same name and DOB on the match since it only matches on these two identifiers.

You can assure the parents that with the direct certification process, their child's personal information is not being compromised. There is no sensitive data that the system matches on or sends to anyone. The only matching criteria are Name and DOB. The other child with the same Name and DOB is receiving benefits under their own name and DOB (they just happen to be the same or very similar).

That said, we rely on the parents/guardians to inform the school about these situations. In most cases, the family will let the school know their child is not eligible and, therefore, will decline the free or reduced price meal benefits. If the parents/guardians have declined benefits, you may exclude that student from future direct certification runs, except the three required Full Enrollment runs. Alternatively, you may also continue to include this student's name on future direct certification runs, but be sure to make a note to yourself that the parents/guardians have declined benefits so that this student does not receive the free or reduced price meal benefits. Remember, as with free and reduced price meal applications, a child's eligibility under direct certification is taken at face value. Therefore, if a child is identified as a match through direct

certification, the child is automatically eligible for free or reduced meal benefits, regardless of any knowledge that the LEA may have about the household's circumstances.

21. ***My school/district is not in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), but we do participate in the Special Milk Program (SMP). Alternately, our LEA has half-day children with no access to NSLP or School Breakfast Program. These half-day children participate in the SMP. Are we required to run Direct Certification (DC) for SMP students?***

    If your school/district provides milk free of charge to all students (non-pricing plan) or if all students must pay for their milk (pricing plan), you do not need to qualify students for free milk benefits (either via application or DC). However, if your school/district provides milk free of charge to **eligible** students, you need to determine if students are qualified for free milk benefits. You can do this either through an application or DC. While you are not required to run DC for SMP students, you are encouraged to do so, as DC is a fast and efficient means to identify students who qualify for "free milk" under the SMP. Free milk applications should be sent out at the start of the school year in addition to running direct certification. Parents may also complete an application for free milk which is posted on the DPI Special Milk Program (SMP) website.
    TIP: SMP only allows for free milk. If a student is matched in DC with a "Z" code, that does not provide a free milk benefit in SMP.

22. ***I know free or reduced meal eligibility can be extended to students who were not identified as directly certified, but are part of a household that is enrolled in FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, FDPIR or Medicaid (O, S, T, G, M or Z codes). I also know that benefits cannot be extended to students in households of foster children (E codes). What about other categorically eligible students not included on the DC match file, like Homeless, Migrant, Runaway, Head Start/Even Start? Can benefits be extended to other students in these households?***

    No, benefits cannot be extended to children in households with an Other Source Categorical student. Similar to having a foster child reside in the home, having a Homeless, Migrant, Runaway, or Head Start/Even Start student reside in a household does not automatically extend benefits to all children in the same manner as participation in FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, FDPIR or Medicaid.

23. ***Do all households which receive Medicaid qualify for free or reduced price meals?***

    No, school enrollment data will be matched with Medicaid eligibility data to identify children who receive Medicaid, or live with a child who receives Medicaid, and whose family income, before expenses and deductions, does not exceed:

    > 130% percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for free school meal eligibility; or 185% percent of the FPL for reduced price meal eligibility.

    Eligible children identified through this matching process can be certified automatically to receive free or reduced price school meal benefits, without requiring the household to submit an application. Students that match with a "Z" code and qualify for reduced price benefits through direct certification extend benefits to other members of the household.

Note: Some households receive Medicaid benefits, but are outside of the income requirements to receive free or reduced meals and will not show up as a DC match code.

24. A parent calls and asks why they did not qualify for DC Medicaid-Reduced this year, but did last year, and nothing has changed?

It could be because of the timing. When parents say their income has not changed, often they are comparing to the end of the last school year, but they should be looking at their income at the time of the first match of the previous school year. Often the original DC match is made at the beginning of the 18-19 school year, and the student receives the meal benefit for the remainder of the school year. This is often the case.

Another reason for the change in eligibility can be due to changing benefits. As students age, DHS may change the beneficiary program from Medicaid CARES to Medicaid CHIP (both are often referred to as Badger Care Plus). But the CHIP program does not provide income information to the Direct Certification Program, so since the income information is not available, the Direct Certification System cannot match by these criteria.

Here is a scenario example. DC was run back in December and January, the child was 5 years old. At that time, the family income was below 185% of the federal poverty limit (FPL) and the child was eligible for Medicaid as the income limit for children age 1 through 5 is 191% FPL. However, later in 2018 the child turned 6 years old. The Medicaid income limit for children ages 6 through 18 is only 156% of the FPL. So even though there was no change in family income, when the child turned 6, the child lost eligibility for Medicaid and became eligible for the CHIP program. Only children with family income below 185% of FPL, and who are eligible for Medicaid, qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. After a child is initially determined eligible for free and reduced lunches, the lunch benefits are allowed to continue throughout the school year, even after the child loses eligibility. However, we have to make a new determination of eligibility for the lunch program at the start of the new school year. That is why the child is no longer eligible.

25. What happened to the B, F, and L codes? I ran DC and no longer see codes.

The B, F, and L codes are still around, but they are no longer eligibility codes. They are designated as error codes, along with #, and you should only see them in records where you have an error in formatting or missing data. They will appear at the top of the results file you receive from the match run. For further information on eligibility and error codes you may access the "Direct Certification Eligibility Codes" document online.

26. Can I just call households and let them know that one or more of their students is eligible for free or reduced meals based on DC?

The household must receive notification of eligibility based on DC. It is encouraged to send the DC Parent/Guardian Notification Letter to households by mail or email. The Notification Letter is a way for the household to notify the school if there are other students in the household not identified through DC that would now be eligible for free or reduced meals based on extension of benefits,

should they choose to do so. Notification of free or reduced meal eligibility through DC may also be done through e-mail if the school has an e-mail address for a parent or guardian.

27. ***Who should we contact for assistance or technical support?***

For technical questions with the **match process**, contact the DPI desk at dpifns@dpi.wi.gov or 608-267-9228. For **technical questions** related to your software, contact your software vendor.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**
   U.S. Department of Agriculture
   Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
   1400 Independence Avenue, SW
   Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
   (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
   program.intake@usda.gov

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