

OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGIC SERVICES
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
February 19 - 20, 2015

OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGIC SERVICES
OFFICE OF CHILD NUTRITION

14. Discussion of the Direct Certification Process with the Office of Child and Nutrition and the Office of Technology and Strategic Services

Executive Summary

Direct certification is a process conducted by the States and by local educational agencies (LEAs) to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for household income applications. The primary means of conducting direct certification is by matching students eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to school enrollment records.

The Offices of Child and Nutrition (OCN) and Technology and Strategic Services (OTSS) have worked diligently to develop a more exact matching program utilizing the Mississippi SNAP file to match against the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS).

As a result of this collaboration, MS' direct certification match will move from 77% to 95%. The 95% match is the federal rate requirement and will assist schools in participating in Community Eligibility, which provides meals to all students at no charge. This new matching procedure will help ensure eligible students receive benefits, provide nutritious meals to more students, and result in increased reimbursements to Mississippi schools.

No Action: Discussion only

Back-up material attached

Direct Certification Program Basics

- **SNAP eligible students are matched to school enrollment – Directly Certified**
- **Families are not required to complete income applications for meals**
- **Students are categorically eligible due to SNAP status**
- **Meals provided to students at no charge**

Direct Certification Impact

- **Provides benefits to all eligible students even if an application is not completed**
- **Critical for participation in the Community Eligibility Program**
 - **All students may receive meals at no charge if match rates are over 40% (60% rate recommended)**
- **Meet USDA requirement of 95% match rate**

Direct Certification Timeline

Time Period	Event
SY 2011-2012	Mississippi Rate for Direct Certification was 77% and the Federal Benchmark was 95%
12/2012	USDA requires Continuous Improvement Plan For States not meeting 95% match rate
03/2012	Child Nutrition submits Continuous Improvement Plan to USDA as required
07/2013	Child Nutrition began technical meetings with MIS to a develop a state level direct certification matching process
08/2013	MIS projected completion date for a new matching system: January 2014
02/2014	Pilot developed by MIS had a lower percentage of matches than the district's current direct certification process.
03/2014	The New Direct Certification matching process was abandoned and reverted to old process.

Direct Certification Timeline

Time Period	Event
10/ 2014	OTSS/OCN meeting to readdress matching process
10/2014-1/2015	OTSS development of new process and frequent meetings with OCN
1/2015	OTSS system program exceeds 95% match rate
1/2015	OTSS system sent to pilot program schools
2/2015	Pilot schools report increases in matching rate
03/2015	Anticipated completion of project

Direct Certification Benefits

- **Increase the number of eligible students receiving benefits**
- **Increase the number of nutritious meals provided to students**
 - **Average daily lunch participation for free students is 77% vs. 42% for paid students**
- **Increase USDA reimbursement**
- **Decrease paperwork burden for schools**
- **Eliminate charges for school meals**

Direct Certification Benefits

- **Meet USDA match rate requirement**
- **Allows Mississippi to take full advantage of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)**
- **Fully implemented, CEP may:**
 - **Result in 5.8 million more school meals**
 - **Provide up to \$19,000,000 per year in additional federal funds to feed Mississippi students**