Instructions for approving the Iowa Eligibility Application for School, Special Milk Program, Child Care and Head Start Center Officials

HOUSEHOLDS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPLETING THEIR OWN APPLICATIONS: While school, and child care centers are expected to provide support and assistance, the applicants themselves should complete as much of the application as they are able. We encourage parents to complete one application and provide copies of the same application to all Child Nutrition Programs in which their children participate. Child Nutrition Programs may share eligibility information among themselves. We encourage programs to develop cooperative relationships among other Child Nutrition Program operators or managers to maximize the number of eligible children receiving benefits.

EXTENSION OF CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY IN HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING FIP OR FOOD ASSISTANCE: If **any** person in the household currently receives FIP or Food Assistance benefits as identified on the Iowa Eligibility Application or under direct certification, free meal eligibility extends to anyone in the household who participates in any Child Nutrition Program. The agency approving the application is responsible to maintain documentation sufficient to demonstrate eligibility.

YEARLONG ELIGIBILITY: Households are NOT required to report changes in income, household size or eligibility for Food Assistance or FIP. Once properly approved for free or reduced price benefits, a household will remain eligible for the entire year. For child care and Head Start centers, the new year starts on October 1. For schools, the year is the current school year plus the first 30 operating days of the following year. Households may apply or reapply at any time.

CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY FOR CHILDREN ENROLLED IN HEAD START: Children enrolled in Head Start programs are automatically eligible for free meals and remain eligible for the entire year (Oct.-Sept.). Eligibility for free meals is granted ONLY to children enrolled in Head Start. Their siblings are NOT automatically granted free meal status and must qualify for benefits based on income, receipt of FIP or Food Assistance benefits (or have migrant, homeless, or runaway status in school programs). Head Start children are included as members of their households for income-based determinations. Documentation of Head Start enrollment must be provided by the Head Start agency, which may include an approved application, a letter of enrollment or a list of enrolled Head Start children.

The **Determining Official** at the local level (school, center, etc.) will review Parts 1-4 of the application and then complete Part 5. Use these guidelines to make decisions for Part 5. Not all check boxes apply to all Programs.

Ethnic and Racial Information: Child Nutrition Programs must collect and maintain data regarding the ethnic and racial characteristics of the children who are receiving benefits. Households may self-identify ethnic and racial information for children in Part 2. Child Nutrition Programs must make a visual determination of the ethnic and racial characteristics for any person who has not self identified.

Income: The Determining Official will fill in this portion of Part 5 when a household completes Part 3 – **Total Household Gross Income**. The Determining Official will record the total amount of income, income frequency and household size. Determining Officials are encouraged to use the current ICAVES tool to determine eligibility, available in the Form Download section of CNP2000.

- If household income is reported with only one frequency (such as all weekly or all monthly), compare the sum of the incomes to the Income Eligibility Guidelines for that frequency. Check the appropriate box and fill in the blank with the sum of the incomes and household size.
- If a household reports income in more than one frequency (such as one income weekly and another monthly), convert all income to annual by using the conversion factors. DO NOT ROUND THE CONVERSIONS. Compare the sum of the annualized incomes to the Income Eligibility Guidelines for annual income. Check the "annually" box and fill in the blank with the sum of the annualized incomes and household size.
- Check the appropriate box under Application Approved ("income") or Application Denied ("over income limits"). If the household qualifies, check the appropriate box under Eligibility Determination, sign and date the application.
- When a household reports zero income, the application is approved Free.

Foster Child: The adult completing the application will mark the checkbox for a foster child in Part 2, if applicable. Foster children can be included as household members or reported on a separate application. Households must report any personal income received by the foster child on their household application. Foster payments received by the family from the placing agency are not considered income and do not need to be reported. When approved, the Determining Official will mark the "foster" and "income" checkboxes. The Determining Official will complete the Approval and Eligibility Determination, sign and date the application.

FIP or Food Assistance: The Determining Official will mark the FIP/Food Assistance checkbox when a household completes Part 2 with a FIP or Food Assistance case number. **NOTE: THE NUMBER ON THE EBT/DEBIT CARD OR FIP CARD IS NOT THE CASE NUMBER.** The case number is 10 characters and is on the DHS Notice of Decision. In many situations, the household can get the case number by calling DHS. Households completing the application based on participation in FIP or Food Assistance programs but failing to provide a valid case number must be denied. Mark the check box "incomplete". **A FIP or Food Assistance number for any household member qualifies all household members for free meal benefits if they participate in any Child Nutrition Programs.**

Determining Official Signature Line: The Determining Official makes the initial eligibility determination and will sign and date the application. For schools, the effective date is the date the Determining Official has made the eligibility determination. For CACFP, the effective date is the first day of the month in which the application was approved or the first day the child receives care, whichever is later.

Homeless/Migrant/Runaway Child: NOTE: THIS APPLIES TO SCHOOLS ONLY. Students determined to be homeless, migrant or runaway by the appropriate officials are not required to complete an Income Eligibility Application. Documentation of homeless, migrant or runaway status may be a letter or list of all students meeting criteria. If an application is completed, the Determining Official will mark the Homeless/Migrant checkbox. The district homeless/migrant liaison or the Determining Official will complete the Approval and Eligibility Determination, sign and date the application. Retain information to document homeless/migrant/runaway status.

Confirming Official Signature Line: NOTE: THIS APPLIES TO SCHOOLS ONLY. The Confirming Official reviews all applications selected for the verification process prior to conducting any other verification activity and checks to ensure that the initial determination was accurate. The Determining Official and the Confirming Official cannot be the same person. Once the confirming reviews are completed, the Local Education Agency (LEA) will proceed with the verification process.

- If the initial determination was incorrect, and the status changes from reduced price to free the LEA makes the increased benefits available immediately, notifies the household of the change in benefits; and verifies the application.
- If verification reduces the level of benefits (from free to reduced price or paid), the household is sent a notice of adverse action.
- If the status changes from free to reduced price based on the Confirmation Review, the LEA does not change the child's status; and verifies the application. If the child's free status is verified, the LEA does not notify the household. However, if the child's status changes from free to either reduced price or paid, the household is sent a notice of adverse action.
- If based on the Confirmation Review, the status changes from free or reduced price to paid, the LEA immediately sends the household a notice of adverse action; does not verify the application; selects another similar application and follows the confirmation review procedures for the newly selected application.

Review the Verification section of the Eligibility Manual for School Meals for additional information.

Follow-up Official Signature Line: NOTE: THIS APPLIES TO SCHOOLS ONLY. There is a formal follow-up requirement for households that fail to respond to the initial request for verification. The Follow-up Official may be the same person as the Determining Official or the Confirming Official. The Follow-up Official must make at least one attempt to obtain the necessary documentation from the household. The attempt may be made through the mail, telephone, email or personal contact. The LEA must document any attempts and the results, if any. If the LEA is unable to verify the household's eligibility status after the follow-up attempt(s), the household's benefits must be terminated. The LEA may contract with a third party to assist with the required follow-up activity. Any third party is subject to the confidentiality requirements outlined in the current regulations. Review the Verification section of the Eligibility Manual for School Meals for additional information.

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAMS:

Tier 1 Income or Tier 1 Area: NOTE: THIS APPLIES TO CACFP HOME SPONSORS ONLY.

Tier 1 Eligibility of Non-Residential Children Enrolled in Tier 2 Mixed Homes: NOTE: THIS APPLIES TO PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN RECEIVE CARE AT AN IN-HOME CARE SETTING.