

Detailed Procedures for Administering the NJDOE Household Information Survey

A. General Administrative Guidance:

1. The administration of a CEP school (district or charter school) is responsible to distribute the New Jersey Department of Education 2016-17 Household Information Survey form. The method of distribution and collection (paper or electronic) is at the discretion of the school administration. The form is available on the NJDOE website at the following link: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/cep/>.
2. The administration of a CEP school must also identify at least one determining official and one confirming official. The number of designated officials may vary according to school size, and may be selected from any appropriate school employee or contractor.
Please note (new as of September 2015): school food service staff may process the forms, but the cost of processing *may not be paid from the non-profit school food service account* and the forms may not be associated with school meals. The LEA must pay for, or reimburse the non-profit school food service account for, the cost of processing the forms.
3. Instructions to parents/guardians for completion of the NJDOE Household Information Survey are included on page 2 of the survey form.
4. School administrators may designate a deadline for parents/guardians to return completed Surveys, but should attempt to collect them as early as possible in order to allow time for verification and entry into NJSMART by the October 15th NJSMART deadline.
5. School administrators should encourage parents/guardians to return survey forms that are free of alterations (e.g. corrective tape, cross-outs, write-overs), as a marked-up paper may affect the form's credibility.

B. Determining Official(s) Guidance:

1. The determining official(s) is responsible for ensuring that each student in a CEP School who is identified as low-income in the New Jersey School Register, as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.1 or any State data collection (e.g. ASSA, CHE, NJSMART), is supported by one of the following:
 - a. A completed, signed, current year (2016-17) NJDOE Household Information Survey that is free of alterations; or
 - b. A direct certification match from the School Nutrition Electronic Application Reimbursement System (SNEARS); or
 - c. Evidence that the student is homeless, migrant, in foster care, or in Head Start; or
 - d. An approved current year "Household Application for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk" for a student in the same household (but who attends a non-

CEP school) may be used as support for the low-income status of the CEP school student.

2. The determining official(s) must ensure the student's designation as low-income is consistent with what is reported in the New Jersey School Register and in other State reports.
3. For any student identified on the School Register as low-income based on information provided in the NJDOE Household Information Survey (item B.1.a. above), the determining official must use the following criteria to review the Survey:
 - a. Part A
 - i. For each household member, is the date of birth, name of school, grade level, and other student information (if applicable) entered?
 - ii. For each student identified as migrant, homeless, foster, or in Head Start, does the district maintain evidence on file to support the designation?
 - b. Part B
 - i. If the FDPIR, TANF, or SNAP box is marked, is a name and case number provided?
 - c. Part C
 - i. Does the household size match the number of household members listed in Part A?
 - ii. Is only one box in only one income range category marked (Range -1; Range - 2; or Range - 3)?
 - iii. If a household size was circled, is it in the same row as the marked box?
 - d. Part D
 - i. Is the certification section complete with signature and date?
 - e. School Use Only –
 - i. Enter the status of the student's survey as F, R, or N as follows:
 - i. F (Free-equivalent) where:
 1. Part A identifies the student as migrant, homeless, foster, or in Head Start; or
 2. Part B has been completed including a case number; or
 3. Part C has a box in Range - 1 that is marked and in line with the appropriate household size;
 - ii. R (Reduced-equivalent) where:
 1. Part C shows a box appropriate for the household size in Range - 2 has been marked;
 - iii. N (Not free/reduced) where:
 1. Part B indicates FDPIR, TANF or SNAP, but the name and/or case number is missing; or
 2. A box in Range - 3 has been marked; or
 3. The Survey does not otherwise indicate the student is F or R using the criteria in i. or ii. above.
 - ii. When Part C shows an income for a household size greater than 8, the determining official must determine status using the income range table

provided in the Quick Reference Guide available through the following link: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/cep/QuickReference.pdf>.

- iii. Use the designated “Reason” space to enter an explanation if the survey has been classified as N. Some recommended examples include:
 - i. “Over income” If the household size is 4 and the corresponding box in Range – 3 is marked.
 - ii. “Failure to sign form” if no signature is provided.
 - iii. “Case number inaccuracy” if a case number is not provided or contains an incorrect combination of digits/numbers/letters.
 - iv. “Multiple incomes provided- unable to determine” if multiple boxes are checked in Part C “Annual Household Income Ranges.”
 - iv. After reviewing the survey, a determining official must sign and date the form in the space provided.
4. Reporting to NJDOE - The determining official must ensure the total number of low-income students in a CEP school that are reported on the ASSA, CHE, NJ SMART, and other state reports agrees with the sum of the following:
- a. The total number of on-roll students who are directly certified through the SNEARS matching system, **plus**
 - b. The number of students who are not directly certified, but who have on file either a completed current year (2016-17) NJDOE Household Information Survey form OR documentation that another household member attending a non-CEP school has an approved 2016-17 “Household Application for Free or Reduced Priced Meals or Free Milk,” **plus**
 - c. The number of students who are not directly certified, but who are identified as homeless, migrant, in foster care, or in Head Start.

Please note: Prior year carryover “Household Applications for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk” will NOT be accepted as a form of support for identifying CEP school students as low-income for 2016-17 State reporting.

C. Confirming Official(s) Guidance:

1. The confirming official is responsible for ensuring that each student in a CEP School who is identified as low-income in the New Jersey School Register, as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.1, or any State data collection (e.g. ASSA, CHE, NJSMART) is supported by appropriate documentation.
2. The confirming official must:
 - a. Obtain from the determining official, all 2016-17 NJDOE Household Information Survey forms returned by parents/guardians. The confirming official should take appropriate steps to confirm the accuracy of forms that contain alterations,

- including but not limited to, documented outreach to the parent or guardian who signed the form to confirm the accuracy of the information.
- b. Separate the 2016-17 NJDOE Household Information Survey forms into two categories:
 - i. F or R (Free- or Reduced-equivalent); and
 - ii. N (Not low-income).
 - c. Determine the number of CEP students (sample size) the district is required to verify using the Sample Size Determination Table, available through the following link: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/cep/SampleSize.pdf>
 - i. The table provides the appropriate percentage or number of low-income CEP students whose income status must be confirmed. Sample size varies with enrollment.
 - i. Sample size may be determined using either enrollments for each CEP school, or the district total enrollment (including CEP and non-CEP schools). The lower sample size may be used.
 - ii. Once the number (sample size) of CEP students has been determined, the confirming official must identify a random group of individual CEP students for confirmation. As an alternative to a random sample, you may use the school register(s) for each CEP school as the student population, and determine a selection interval (e.g. every 5th low-income student) by dividing the number of low-income students reported in the school register by the required sample size. For example, where a CEP school register reports 1,320 low-income students, the Sample Size table shows 264 of those students must be selected for verification. Since $1,320/264 = 5$, the official will select every 5th student reported as low-income in the CEP school register(s) until 264 individual students reported as CEP/low-income have been identified for confirmation.
 - d. Successful confirmation of the low-income status for each student sampled through this process requires obtaining documentation in the form of one of the following:
 - i. A completed current year NJDOE Household Information Survey form marked F or R by the determining official (Important note: see #3 below);
 - ii. A SNEARS-generated Direct Certification match; or
 - iii. Evidence the student is migrant, homeless, in foster care or Head Start; or
 - iv. Evidence of an approved current year “Household Application for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk” for another household member.
3. When the 2016-17 NJDOE Household Information Survey is the source documentation for a student reported as low-income in a CEP school pursuant to 2.d.i (above), the Survey must be subjected to additional verification procedures including, but not limited to:
- a. The confirming official (or representative) must send the household a letter including all of the following information:
 - i. That the household was selected for verification;

- ii. The types of acceptable documentation that may be provided to confirm current income (pay stubs, award letters from assistance agencies for benefits such as social security or supplemental security income, and support payment decrees from courts);
 - iii. That an acceptable alternative to income data is proof that a child or any household member is receiving benefits under the SNAP/TANF/FDPIR or is “Other Source Categorically Eligible” (migrant, homeless, etc.);
 - iv. The date by which documentation must be received by the school; and
 - v. The name of a school official who can provide assistance with the form.
- b. Requirements for the verification of written evidence:
 - i. Acceptable sources include: SNAP, TANF, FDPIR; pay stubs from employers, award letters from government agencies.
 - ii. Written evidence must include the name of the household member, income amount and frequency, and the date the income was received.
 - iii. For Other Source Eligibility, acceptable evidence is an official letter, notice, or list from the appropriate State agency. EBT cards cannot be used to confirm eligibility. The evidence must contain the period of eligibility.
- c. Collateral contact requirements:
 - i. A collateral contact is a person outside the household who is familiar with the circumstances and who can confirm eligibility (e.g. employers, social service agencies, religious organizations). These contacts should only be requested when the household cannot provide written evidence.
 - ii. The official must give the household the opportunity to designate the contact. The official may select a collateral contact if the household fails to designate an acceptable one, but the collateral contact may be contacted only with the consent of the household member.
 - iii. All contact (oral or written) must be documented, dated, and initialed.
 - iv. If the collateral contact is unwilling or unable to provide the requested information, the school must contact the household to complete the verification process.
 - v. Local SNAP lists available to the district may be used to verify Assistance Program case numbers reported on the Surveys.
- d. Agency Records
 - i. A household’s eligibility may be confirmed through the use of information maintained by other government agencies to which the State agency, LEA, or school has legal access.
 - ii. Acceptable documentation of income or receipt of assistance from any of the above sources may be provided for any point in time between the month prior to application and the time the household is required to provide income documentation.

4. When verification is considered complete
 - a. The following demonstrates how a school/LEA determines that verification is complete and no follow-up is required:
 - i. The household submits either adequate written evidence or collateral contact corroboration of income or categorical eligibility; OR
 - ii. The household submits adequate written evidence or collateral contact corroboration of income indicating the child(ren) should be classified in the proper grouping according to the documents presented; OR
 - iii. The Household Information Survey provides case numbers and it is determined that no household member is receiving benefits from an Assistance Program, **and** the student is **re-categorized** accordingly.
5. Follow-up for obtaining support documentation
 - a. The school/LEA must make *at least one follow-up attempt* when the household:
 - i. Does not respond to the request for verification;
 - ii. Submits insufficient or obsolete written evidence;
 - iii. Does not designate collateral contacts; or
 - iv. Collateral contacts are unable or unwilling to provide evidence.
 - b. The follow-up attempt must be documented: it may be in writing (including through the parent/guardian email) or by telephone.
 - c. LEAs must ensure LEP households are provided adequate language assistance and understand the need to respond to the verification request.
 - d. The LEA must encourage the household to report the income data. Failure to provide adequate written evidence or to designate an adequate collateral contact may cause the school to report inaccurate data to the state and may result in changes to the school district's state aid allocation.
 - e. Verification is considered complete when, after at least one follow-up attempt, one of the following occurs:
 - i. The household responds and provides all needed evidence (student's status is adequately verified).
 - ii. The school/LEA is unable to continue its verification activities because the household fails to provide adequate written evidence or knowledgeable collateral contacts, **and** the student is **re-categorized**.

Please Note: Any and all records associated with the NJDOE Household Information Survey must be maintained for audit purposes FOR A PERIOD OF SEVEN YEARS.