

## 2026 Enrollment and Income Eligibility Guidance

Participants are only eligible for the free or reduced price meal category when a completed income form has been approved. Forms cannot be approved until all required information is completed.

<b>Abbreviations:</b>	FA	Food Assistance Program
	FDPIR	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
	DCF	Department for Children and Families
	SSN	Social Security Number
	TAF	Temporary Assistance to Families
	E/IEF	Enrollment & Income Eligibility Form
	SSI	Supplemental Security Income

ERROR or SITUATION	ACTION REQUIRED
<b>A. Child Enrollment</b>	
1. <b>Child's Date of Birth</b> left blank.	<b>Application cannot be determined until it is complete.</b> Date of birth can be obtained from other program records or be returned to the parent/guardian to complete.
2. <b>Times of Care</b> left blank.	<b>Application cannot be determined until it is complete.</b> The form must be returned to the parent/guardian to complete the regular times of care, arrival times and departure times.
3. <b>Regular Days of Care</b> left blank.	<b>Application cannot be determined until it is complete.</b> The form must be returned to the parent/guardian to complete the regular days the child will be in care.
4. <b>Meals Served During Care</b> left blank.	<b>Application cannot be determined until it is complete.</b> The form must be returned to the parent/guardian to complete the meals served to the child during their time in care.
5. <b>Ethnic/Race</b> classifications left blank.	The parent/guardian has the option of completing this information or not. Center staff must encourage completion.
6. Parent listed <b>drop in</b> for the child's enrollment information.	<b>Application cannot be determined until it is complete.</b> The form must be returned to the parent/guardian to complete all components of enrollment: child's date of birth, times child may be in care, days the child may be in care, and meals that may be served while the child is in care. Parents should mark the form for any possible time, days, and meals that the child might be in care.
7. Multiple children are listed and the enrollment information is only provided for one child.	The form must be returned or parent/guardian contacted to complete all components of enrollment for each child in care. Record the additional information provided by the parent/guardian, date and initial form.
8. Weeks after the E/IEF has been completed, parent lets center staff know that child's times of care, days of care and/or meals needed during care has changed.	Center staff should ask the parent to update and correct the current enrollment form to reflect current needs initial and date form or they can complete a new enrollment form.

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<b>B. Household Receiving Benefits</b>	
1. <b>Foster Child(ren)</b> are listed on the same form with other children in the household.	All children in a household, including foster children, may be listed on one form. Note: It is possible they will receive different benefits.
2. <b>FA or TAF case number is invalid.</b> The case number must be 8 digits beginning with 0, 1, or 2.	<b>Application cannot be determined until it is complete.</b> Contact parent/guardian to obtain a valid case number or have parents complete Total Household Gross Income Section of the form.
3. <b>Parent lists that they receive FA, TAF, FDPIR, SSI or Medicaid but no case number is provided. (SSI and Medicaid are for adult participants only)</b>	<b>Application cannot be determined until it is complete.</b> Contact parent/guardian to obtain a valid case number or have parents complete Total Household Gross Income Section of the form.
4. <b>Medicaid or SSI case number is invalid. (Adult form only)</b>	<b>Application cannot be determined until it is complete.</b> Contact parent/guardian/participant to obtain a valid case number or have them complete Total Household Gross Income Section of the form.
<b>C. Household Income</b>	
1. For one or more household members, the <b>income section is blank</b> and the "Check if Zero Income" box or "My children will not qualify for Free/Reduced Price meals box" is not checked.	Any income field left blank is a positive indication of no income and certifies that there is no income to report. Applications with blank income fields are to be processed by the sponsor as complete.
2. Household did not indicate <b>frequency of income.</b>	Contact household to determine income frequency.
3. Household indicates a <b>range of income.</b>	Contact adult who signed application to determine annualized income OR income received in the month prior to application, whichever most accurately reflects current income. If unable to get clarification from parent then determine the form based on the largest amount of the range.
4. Household reports <b>income from prior year's income tax</b> information rather than current income.	Contact adult who signed application to clarify income. Household may use prior year's income tax information <u>only</u> if income reported is seasonal, farm, or from self-employment, and only if last year's income is representative of the current year's estimated income. If prior month's income is more representative of household's current income, the household should report prior month's income amount.
5. The box is checked stating the household income is over guidelines and they will not qualify for free/reduced price meals but there is income information reported.	Contact adult who signed application to clarify income.

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6. Household reports an <b>income loss</b> from one or more income sources but has income from other sources.	Income from wages or other income sources may not be reduced by the amount of a business loss. Negative self-employment income is computed as zero income. When computing household income, include only income amounts that are positive numbers.
7. <b>No Social Security Number (SSN)</b> is reported.	For applications approved based on income guidelines, obtain the last four digits of the SSN from adult signing the application. SSN may NOT be obtained from other records and transferred to application. If adult signing the form does not have a SSN, and has checked the box or has written the word "No" or "None", the form may be approved without the SSN. The abbreviation "NA" is NOT acceptable. Don't assume adult signing application has no SSN if one is not listed. Contact household to obtain information. SSNs are NOT required for applications approved based on FA, TAF or FDPIR eligibility or for foster child only applications.
8. <b>SSN</b> reported is NOT that of adult who signed form.	Treat application as if no SSN is reported. Obtain the last four digits of the SSN of adult who signed form or obtain signature of adult whose SSN was provided.
9. There is <b>no adult signature</b> (parent/guardian/participant/adult) or date on form.	<b>The form is invalid until signature and date are obtained.</b> Contact the household and obtain adult's signature and current date. If participant is a foster child, the foster parent or caseworker must sign and date the form.
10. <b>Determining official did not sign and date the form.</b>	Determining official must review the form for completion then make the income category determination, sign and date the form. Forms are not eligible to be counted in the free or reduced priced category until the determining official has signed and dated the form even if the sponsor chooses the parent signature and date as the effective date.
<b>D. Other Application Situations</b>	
1. Form has been <b>faxed</b> .	Faxing is an insecure way to transmit confidential information. Sponsors should NEVER fax a completed form. Use regular mail for these documents. Although households should be discouraged from faxing forms, such forms may be accepted.
2. <b>No Enrollment or E/IEF</b> is on file, but the participant's meals were claimed.	If no form is on file then the participant's meals are not reimbursable. Participants must have a current and complete E/IEF or an Enrollment form on file to be included in the income eligibility category counts. If a claim has been filed then a revised claim must be filed to remove these meals. <b>Exception:</b> At-Risk Afterschool Meals & Emergency Shelters do not require an enrollment or income form. Outside School Hours Centers (OSHC) do not require an enrollment form during the school year but they do collect income forms. During the summer, OSHC require enrollment and income eligibility forms.
3. Not all required information was listed on application.	Contact adult who signed application to obtain required information such as income, last four digits of the Social Security number, names of household members and their income. Document contact, record information obtained and make determination.

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4. Not all household members or income sources were reported on application.	Determining official must make initial determination based upon face value of application.
5. Participant is listed on forms for two different households.	If the participant is living in more than one household, the participant is considered a member of each household. If households do not have same eligibility status, the participant receives greatest level of benefits.
6. Parent used white out to change information on the form.	If a parent used white out or erased information, make a notation in the For Center Use Only section.
7. White out was used by a staff member to change information on the form.	If a staff member uses white out or erases information provided by the parent/guardian the form becomes invalid. A new form will need to be collected from the household.
8. Sponsor completed section of the Enrollment or E/IEF form before making copies for the parent/guardian/participant to complete.	Forms cannot be pre-filled with enrollment information or any signature dates before coping for actual completion. If form is pre-filled, the form is considered invalid. The parent/guardian/participant must complete a new form.
9. In a shared custody situation where a child lives alternately with their mother and father. The mother has turned in an E/IEF that is eligible for the free category. The father has turned in an E/IEF that is over guidelines. Which category would the child be claimed?	When joint custody has been awarded and the child physically changes residence, the child is considered part of the household where s/he resides. In these situations, if both parents complete an E/IEF for the child and different eligibility statuses result, the greatest benefit level is used. If the mother's situation results in the free category, then the child would counted as free regardless of which parent had custody at the time.
10. A child who was placed in foster care with a family at the time the E/IEF was completed, but later during the year the family adopted the child. Does a new E/IEF have to be completed?	Due to year-long eligibility the free eligibility status of the foster child does not change within the year if the child is adopted. When the current E/IEF form expires, a new form would need to be completed and the child would be a part of the household, not a foster child.
11. An E/IEF includes income that is received on a temporary basis and the center would like to make the determination for only 30 days and have the family update the income information.	USDA prohibits the use of temporary approval because of the year long duration of eligibility. Households are not required to report more often than annually.