

GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM**DIVISION: Temporary Assistance****June 3, 2005**

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TO: Commissioners, TA Directors, FS Directors, Staff Development Coordinators, TOP Coordinators, CAP Coordinators

FROM: Russell Sykes, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Employment and Transitional Supports

SUBJECT: Verification of Children's Eligibility for Free School Meal Programs

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2005

CONTACT PERSON: Food Stamp Bureau @ 1-800-343-8859, extension 3-1469

Children who receive Family Assistance (FA) and/or food stamp (FS) benefits are categorically eligible for free school meals and summer feeding programs. Each school year, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) sends direct-certification letters to the parents or caretakers of children receiving FA or FS, to take to their school as eligibility verification. OTDA also revised the manual and automated notices of application and recertification approvals for FA and FS households to include information that they may take to their school regarding their children's eligibility for free school meals. Families also may submit applications to their school district for free or reduced price school meals, and some school districts have asked local social services districts to verify school meal program applicants' receipt of FA and/or FS. The recently-enacted Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-265) amended the School Lunch Act and Food Stamp Act to make it easier for children in public and private schools to have their eligibility for free school meals be verified.

Effective with the 2005-2006 school year, school districts will select a sample of their school meal applications for verification. School districts will send their verification requests to OTDA, and OTDA will respond directly to the school districts. The New York State Education Department will inform all school districts of this new procedure.

Questions about OTDA's school meal certification or verification process may be directed to the Food Stamp Bureau.