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To: School Business Administrators, Charter School Leads; Nonpublic School Administrators;
Verifying Officials

From: Arleen Ramos-Szatmary, Coordinator
School Nutrition Programs

Date: August 30, 2024

Subject: Alternative Sample Size Options for Verification for School Year 2024 – 2025

Section 9(b)(3) of the NSLA and regulations at 7 CFR 245.6a(c)(1) establishes requirements in conducting verification of eligibility for free and reduced-price meals based on applications in participating schools.

The standard sample size for Verification is three percent of all applications approved by the Local Education Agency (LEA) for the school year, as of October 1st, selected from error prone applications. Some LEAs may qualify to utilize an alternative verification sampling method.

There are two ways to annually qualify to utilize an alternative sample size. Eligibility is based on non-response rates from the prior year(s):

- 1.) Lowered Non-Response Rate [7 CFR 245.6a(d)(2)]: Any LEA may use an alternative sample size for any school year when its non-response rate for the preceding school year was less than 20%.
- 2.) Improved Non-Response Rate [7 CFR 245.6a(d)(3)]: Any LEA with more than 20,000 children approved by application as eligible, as of October 1 of the school year, may use an alternative sample size for any school year when its non-response rate for the preceding school year was at least 10% below the non-response rate for the second preceding school year.

If eligible, LEAs may apply for one of two alternative sample sizes as listed below:

- 1.) Alternative One:
 - a. Three percent of all applications approved by the LEA for the school year, as of October 1, selected at random; or
- 2.) Alternative Two:
 - a. One percent of all applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1, selected from error prone applications; PLUS
 - i. One-half of one percent of applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1, that provide case numbers in lieu of income information.

LEAs choosing to utilize an alternative sampling method should complete the [Verification Alternative Sample Size Application](#) by September 13, 2024. Schools will be notified of their approval by September 30, 2024.

The [Alternative Sample Size for Verification Flowchart](#) may also be helpful. Additional guidance regarding the Verification process and upcoming trainings will be provided in the coming weeks. Questions should be directed to snp@ag.nj.gov or 609-984-0693.