

# Application for Alternate I or Alternate II Verification Sample Size

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**Issue Number:** E-Memo 06-2025

**Correspondence Date:** 09/02/2025

**Regulatory Authority:** 7 CFR 245.6a(c); National School Lunch Act Section 9(b)(3)

**Response Required:** No

**Attention:** Child Nutrition Directors and Verifying Officials

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The purpose of this memo is to inform districts of their ability to apply for the use of alternate verification sampling methods. Verification of meal eligibility status is required when meal statuses are determined through the application process. Requirements for the verification process are established in Section 9(b)(3) of the National School Lunch Act and 7CFR 245.6a(c)(1). Local Educational Agencies (LEA)s must follow these regulatory procedures.

Districts are required to request and receive State Agency approval to perform an alternative verification sampling method. If a district chooses to use an alternative sampling method, click [HERE](#) for the application. Submit no later than Friday, September 26, 2025. Districts will be notified of their status by the end of the day on Tuesday, September 30, 2025.

Any district not applying for approval to use an alternative sampling method will use the Standard Sampling Method. Districts placed on the [Required Standard List](#) due to verification errors in school year 2024-2025 do not qualify to use an alternate sampling method in school year 2025-2026.

## **Qualifying to Use Alternate Sample Size:**

There are two ways a LEA may annually qualify to use an alternate sample size:

- Lowered Non-Response Rate [7 CFR 245.6a(d)(2)]: Any LEA may use an alternate sample size for any school year when its non-response rate for the preceding school year was less than 20 percent. For example, for SY 2025-2026, an LEA could have used an alternate sample size if in SY 2024-2025 the LEA's non-response rate was 18 percent.

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

Additional information on the sampling methods may be found in the [Eligibility Manual for School Meals Determining and Verifying Eligibility](#).

<b>Available Sample Sizes</b>	
<b>Standard Sample Size [7 CFR 245.6a(c)(3)]</b>	
<b>Standard</b>	<p>Sample size equals the lesser of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three percent of all applications approved by the LEA for the school year, as of October 1 of the school year, selected from error prone applications; or</li> <li>• 3,000 error prone applications approved by the LEA for the school year, as of October 1 of the school year.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternate Sample Sizes Available to Qualified LEAs [7 CFR 245.6a(c)(4)]</b>	
<b>Alternate One</b>	<p>Sample size equals the lesser of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three percent of all applications approved by the LEA for the school year, as of October 1 of the school year, selected at random; or</li> <li>• 3,000 applications approved by the LEA for the school year, as of October 1 of the school year, selected at random.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternate Two</b>	<p>Sample size equals the lesser of the sum of either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,000 of all applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1 of the school year, selected from error prone applications; or</li> <li>• One percent of all applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1 of the school year, selected from error prone applications.</li> </ul> <p>PLUS the lesser of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 500 applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1 of the school year, which provide case numbers in lieu of income information; or</li> <li>• One-half of one percent (.05 percent) of applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1, of the school year that provide case numbers in lieu of income information.</li> </ul>

If you have questions, please contact your Area Specialist at 501-324-9502.