

Application for Alternate I or Alternate II Verification Sample Size

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Correspondence Date: 8/26/2024

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

Response Required: No

Attention: Superintendents, 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 Education 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 Thursday, September 26, 2024. Districts will be notified of their status by the end of the day on Monday, September 30, 2024.

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 2023-2024 do not qualify to use an alternate sampling method.

Standard Sample Size:

- Three percent of all applications approved by the LEA for the school year, as of October 1 of the school year, selected from the error prone applications; or
- 3,000 error prone applications approved by the LEA for the school year, as of October 1 of the school year.

Qualifying to Use an Alternate Sample Size:

There are two ways a local educational agency (LEA) may annually qualify to use an alternate sample size based on lowered non-response rates.

- 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 2023-2024, an LEA could have used an alternate sample size if in SY 2022-2023 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.

If the LEA qualifies for one of the above options, Alternate I or Alternate II sample size may be used.

Alternate I – Sample size equals the lesser of:

- Three percent of all applications approved by the LEA for the school year, as of October 1, selected at random; or
- 3,000 applications approved by the LEA for the school year, as of October 1, selected at random.

Alternate II – Sample size equals the lesser of the sum of either:

- 1,000 of all applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1, selected from error prone applications; or
- One percent of all applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1, selected from error prone applications; PLUS
- 500 applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1, which provide case numbers in lieu of income information; or
- One-half of one percent (0.05 %) of applications approved by the LEA, as of October 1, that provide case numbers in lieu of income information.

Additional information on the sampling methods may be found in the Eligibility Manual for School Meals Determining and Verifying Eligibility.

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