

OSPI School Meal Programs Reference Sheet

Verification for Cause

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) participating in school meal programs and that distribute and determine eligibility from free and reduced-price meal applications may choose to verify questionable applications. This process is called Verification for Cause.

Verification for Cause is an appropriate method to address integrity concerns and can be initiated at any point during the school year. It is important to understand the requirements and to have procedures in place prior to conducting Verification for Cause.

Requirements

- Prior to certifying students for benefits, review meal applications for discrepancies in the information provided.
- Follow up with households on questionable and incomplete information.
- If discrepancies are found, the approving official should:
 - Seek clarification about the information provided in order to make a determination in a timely manner;
 - Deny the application with an explanation that incomplete information was provided; or
 - Approve the application and initiate Verification for Cause.
- In all cases, verification efforts must **not** delay the approval of applications. If the application is complete and indicates the student is eligible for benefits, the application must be approved.
- If verification is necessary for integrity concerns, initiate Verification for Cause **after** the application has been approved.
- To verify an approved application for cause, the Notification of Selection for Verification letter must be used.
- Follow standard verification procedures and timelines.
- If the household fails to submit information or, submits information that does not support the initial determination of eligibility, the household must be sent the notice of adverse action to terminate meal benefits.
- Any applications verified under Verification for Cause by an LEA are **separate** from the verification sample required by annual verification process.



Sponsor Responsibilities

- Establish an internal procedure for Verification for Cause describing the circumstances for initiating verification for cause, prior to implementing.
- Follow special instructions provided by the USDA for Verification for Cause for School District Employees when applicable.
- Consult LEA legal counsel as needed.

Resources

- [Eligibility Manual for School Meals webpage](#)
- [SP 13-2012 Verification for Cause in School Meal Programs](#)

Acronym Reference

- CNS – Child Nutrition Services
- NSLP – National School Lunch Program
- OSPI – Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- SBP – School Breakfast Program
- USDA – United States Department of Agriculture