

OSPI CNS School Meal Programs

Frequently Asked Questions

Family Income Survey

In Washington State, funding for state education programs uses free and reduced-price eligibility information. Schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), Provision 2 non-base years, or programs that do not operate NSLP/SBP (i.e., virtual schools, some skill centers, etc.) must distribute the Family Income Survey (FIS) to collect income data annually for continued support of other education funding sources. Data collected by the FIS is used for several state need-based funding mechanisms such as E-Rate and the Learning Assistance Program (LAP). Information collected by the FIS may also be used to qualify students for additional support and reduced fees.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. When should the FIS be distributed?

LEAs must distribute the FIS annually after July 1 for continued support of other educational funding sources. While the FIS is not required for households to complete, it is a requirement that LEAs distribute the FIS to households not directly certified.

Resource: [Family Income Survey Instructions and Best Practices](#)

2. What is the effective date of eligibility for the Family Income Survey (FIS)?

The effective date of eligibility is the date the FIS was approved and entered in the district's system.

3. Are LEAs required to use OSPI's Family Income Survey prototype?

No, LEAs are not required to use OSPI's version of the FIS. However, OSPI has updated the FIS form to include more culturally inclusive language especially around the term 'poverty.' If LEAs choose to use their own FIS, they should compare their form to OSPI's to ensure accurate information is collected and their language matches.

Resource: [Family Income Survey](#)

4. How should the FIS be distributed?

Distribute the FIS in enrollment packets mailed to households before school starts, during open houses, during family visits to the classroom, at parent-teacher conferences, and other places or events where parents or guardians may be in attendance.

It is best practice to have a downloadable copy of the FIS that is easily accessible to households on the LEA website.



5. When should the FIS be processed?

The FIS should be processed within 10 working days and reported in CEDARS by March 31 to ensure proper data collection for other state educational funding.

Resources: [Family Income Survey Timeline](#)

6. Who should process and distribute the FIS?

LEAs may use non-food service staff to complete this work or fund food service staff completing tasks related to the FIS with a funding source outside of the non-profit school food service staff. Staff time for processing and distributing the FIS cannot be coded to the non-profit school food service account as it is not a federal requirement.

Resource: [Family Income Survey – Instructions and Best Practices](#)

7. How should the FIS be coded into CEDARS?

- a. Code 25 – Students live in a household with an income comparable to eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.
- b. Leave blank – Household does not qualify or the FIS was not returned.

8. Is a “Consent to Share Meal Eligibility” form required to share FIS information?

“Consent to Share” forms are required to share eligibility information with programs not authorized under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA). Any student that has been Directly Certified for free or reduced-price school meals or has a Family Income Survey on file that meets the income guidelines of the free and reduced-price meal application are considered eligible for fee removals through House Bill 1660.

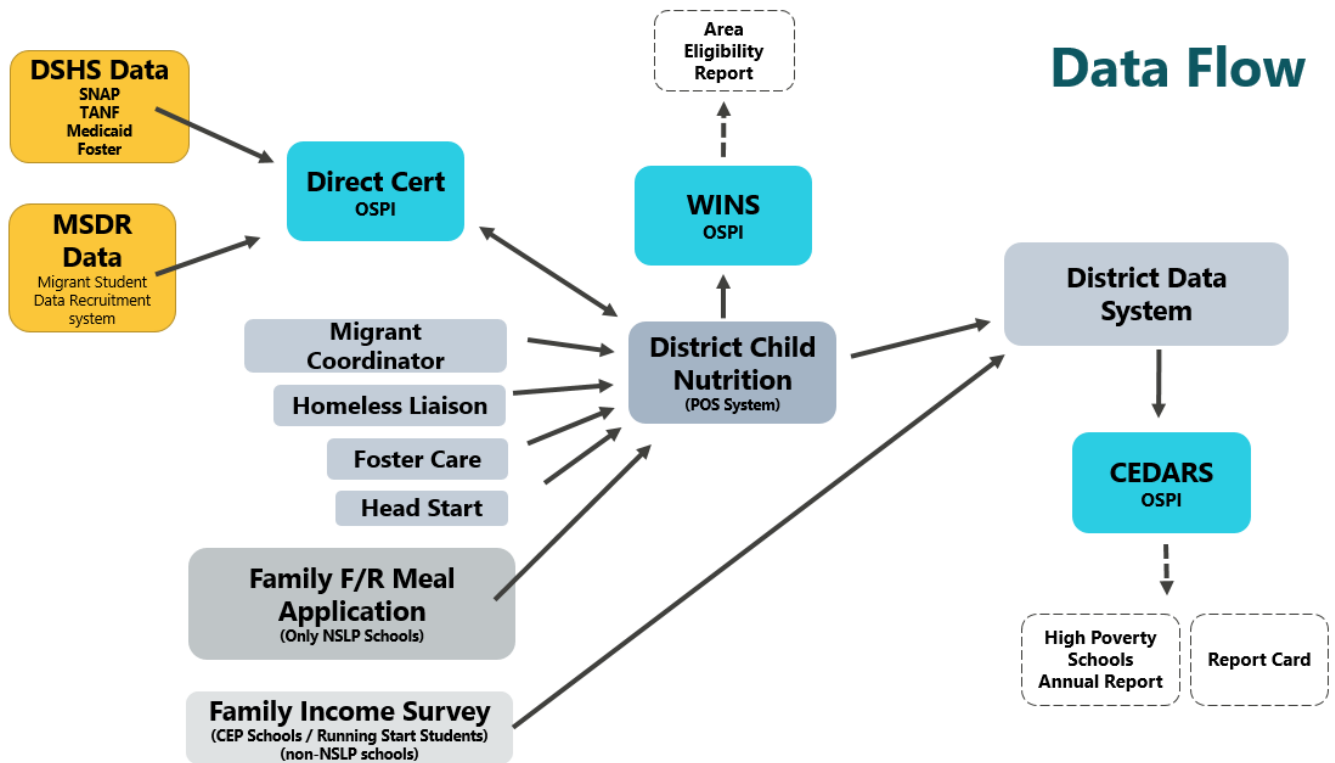
Resource: [Implementing HB 1660: Consent to Share Information Reference Sheet](#)

9. Is household notification required to share the results of the Family Income Survey?

No, it is a local level decision whether to notify households of the results of the Family Income Survey (FIS). With the potential for households to receive reduced fees through HB 1660, it may be beneficial to provide households with a notification of the results. If a district chooses to draft a letter template for this purpose, the letter should not reference the USDA Child Nutrition Programs as the FIS is not used for this purpose. Please note that households are still required to be notified of their eligibility through Direct Certification or Direct Certification-Medicaid.

Notice of Eligibility for Reduced Fees via the Family Income Survey and Direct Certification letter templates are available on the [CEP & Provision 2 webpage](#).

10. Below is a diagram to help visualize the data flow of the FIS:



References

- [House Bill 1238](#)
- [USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#)
- [7 CFR 210](#)
- [7 CFR 245](#)

Acronym Reference

- CEDARS – Comprehensive Education Data and Research System
- CFR – Code of Federal Regulations
- CNS - Child Nutrition Services
- FIS – Family Income Survey
- LAP – Learning Assistance Program
- LEA – Local Education Agency
- NSLP – National School Lunch Program
- OSPI - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- SBP – School Breakfast Program
- USDA - United States Department of Agriculture