Medicaid Direct Certification Demonstration Project

What is the Medicaid Direct Certification Demonstration Project?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is conducting demonstration projects to expand the evaluation of direct certification with Medicaid for both free and reduced-price meal eligibility in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Direct certification with Medicaid is the use of Medicaid data files to identify children eligible to receive meals through the NSLP and SBP at free or reduced price without need of application. Colorado was recently approved by the U.S Department of Agriculture to participate in the Medicaid Direct Certification Demonstration Project beginning in the 2023-24 school year. Colorado's Department of Education (CDE) and Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) are updating technology systems to enable direct certification with Medicaid data by July 1, 2023.

What Districts Need to Know

- Districts will use the same system currently used for direct certification, the Colorado Nutrition Portal, for Medicaid direct certification.
- Districts will conduct direct certification in the same manner as in the past. The only differences are the addition of Medicaid data to the data file and that direct certification with Medicaid can qualify students for both free and reduced-price meal eligibility.
- Medicaid status will qualify to extend eligibility to other household members.
- The new data file districts will upload into their certification and benefit issuance system will include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), migrant data, and Medicaid Free and Reduced data.
- District benefit issuance systems should be ready to receive Medicaid data via the direct certification file by July 1, 2023.
- District technology systems need to accurately assign students the correct benefit (free or reduced) and identify the method of direct certification as Medicaid.

Project Timeline

- **January 2023 - June 2023**: CDE and HCPF update technology systems to enable direct certification with Medicaid data.
- **April 2023 - June 2023**: District technology vendors update technology systems to enable direct certification with Medicaid data.
- **April 2023 - June 2023**: Districts are trained by CDE on Medicaid direct certification.
- **July 1, 2023**: First direct certification file containing SNAP, TANF, migrant, and Medicaid data available in the Colorado Nutrition Portal. Districts conduct direct certification with Medicaid data.

For More Information

Districts should contact the School Nutrition Unit with questions or for more information.

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