



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

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**DATE:** February 13, 2012

**MEMO CODE:** CACFP 07-2012, SFSP 09-2012

**SUBJECT:** Eligibility Based on Census Data: 2012 Data Release

**TO:** Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance regarding the use of census data for area eligibility determinations in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This memorandum supersedes the following memoranda, which discussed the use of 2000 census data to determine area eligibility: *Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): Using 2000 Census Data*, May 5, 2003, and *Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): Revised 2000 Census Data*, June 30, 2003.

#### **Area Eligibility Policy**

CACFP day care homes and SFSP sites that establish eligibility using census data are required to use the most recent census data available (7 CFR 226.6(f); 7 CFR 225.6(c)). The Census Bureau will now estimate household income annually using the American Community Survey (ACS) and therefore, the Food and Nutrition Service will release these new estimates every year. However, in order to reduce burden and maintain consistency within the Programs, area eligibility determinations based on census data are now effective for five years (see CACFP 02-2012, SFSP 02-2012, *Eligibility Based on Census Data*, October 31, 2011).

Census Block Groups (CBGs) will continue to be the geographical unit used to assess eligibility for CACFP and SFSP when using census data. In order for a CACFP day care home or SFSP site to be eligible, 50 percent or more of the children in a CBG must be eligible for free or reduced price school meals.

In the past, CACFP and SFSP used different definitions of children in establishing whether an area is eligible using census data. However, since CACFP no longer establishes area eligibility based on elementary school data, CACFP day care homes and SFSP sites will be considered area eligible if they are located in a CBG that qualifies under either CACFP or SFSP. Therefore, our 2012 Data Release includes a column of CBGs for CACFP and a separate column for SFSP. We have included a column (with the heading "Eligible") to indicate whether the CBG is eligible under either Program.

### **Day Care Homes**

Effective immediately, the 2000 census data may no longer be used to determine tier I eligibility status of a CACFP day care home; only the 2006-2010 ACS data may be used. Sponsors may reconsider the eligibility of all tier II day care homes based on the new census data. If a day care home is currently classified as tier II, but the CBG data demonstrates that the home is now tier I, then the sponsor may immediately change the status of that home to tier I and pay the higher rate of reimbursement for the current month and future months. Note, retroactive reimbursement at the higher tier I rates will not be provided for any previous month.

Sponsors must annually inform tier II day care home providers that the provider may ask for a reclassification to be considered when new census data become available each year and that reclassification may be made at any time for tier II homes. Additionally, sponsors must review all tier I day care homes currently eligible based on census data and make a new determination using the newly available census data, as well as other available methods. Sponsors may choose to reconsider day care home classification during the next scheduled on-site review. The review and reclassification of tier I day care homes must be completed by September 30, 2012. State agencies may establish an earlier completion date if they choose.

### **Using the New Data**

Instructions for using the 2006-2010 ACS CBG information to determine CACFP day care home or SFSP site eligibility are provided below. This is a two step process: 1) become familiar with the Census data and formats; 2) determine which CBGs are eligible.

Individual .TXT (tab delimited text) and .XLS (Excel) files containing eligibility information have been created for every CBG for each State and named accordingly. These files can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/6torz22> These files can be opened using word processing (Word, Google Docs) or data management software (Excel, Access), or as a text file. As noted above, within each file is an 'Eligible' column that can be used to determine eligibility for both Programs. Please see below for important details about opening the file correctly in different formats.

Instructions for determining which CBGs are eligible are available in the same folder as the data files: <http://tinyurl.com/6torz22> Please note, the instructions require <http://www.microsoft.com/silverlight/>

As this is our first release of these annual data, we would like the data to be as useful as possible and would appreciate feedback regarding how the data are delivered, including formatting, and challenges encountered when using the data. Next year, we will release the 2007-2011 ACS data. As new data are released, State agencies will be required to use the newest data for classifications.

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State Directors  
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State agencies should direct any questions or comments concerning this guidance to the appropriate Regional Office.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindy Long  
Director  
Child Nutrition Division