

	MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM		ISSUED	REVISED	CHAPTER	SECTION
	CHILD CARE CENTERS POLICY & PROCEDURE MANUAL		3/91	1/16	10	10.4
CHAPTER Chapter 10. Free and Reduced-Price Meals			SUBJECT Income Eligibility Form Overview			

The Income Eligibility Form (IEF) serves as a tool to evaluate the meal eligibility status of the children enrolled in the center. Federal regulations require that specific information be collected on the IEF in order for benefits to be received. It is very important that the IEF be accurately completed by the parent and carefully evaluated by the center personnel before a claiming classification is determined. Incorrect claiming classifications will result in an over-payment to the institution and repayment to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services – Bureau of Community Food and Nutrition Assistance (CFNA).

Meal reimbursement to child care centers is based upon the claiming category of each child participating at the center. The claiming category is determined by obtaining family size and household income data from parents or legal guardians of the child(ren) and comparing this information to the income eligibility guidelines. Based on the income eligibility guidelines, the child is classified as free, reduced, or paid.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) updates the income eligibility guidelines yearly. When reviewing the IEFs, use the most current income guidelines. Important points to remember are:

1. An Income Eligibility Form (IEF) must be on file at the center for **each** child claimed for free and reduced-price meals (including Family Support Division Title XX vendor children). **If a parent or legal guardian does not choose to complete the income eligibility form, then the child must be claimed in the paid category.**
2. Child care centers have flexibility concerning the effective date of certification for Program benefits. The date to be used to make this determination may be either the date the parent or guardian signed the income eligibility form or the date on which the center official signs the form to certify eligibility of the child. However, if the date of parent signature is not within the month of certification or the immediately preceding month, the effective date must be the date of certification. Child care centers must decide which date they will rely on as the effective date and apply this date consistently to all income eligibility forms received.
3. The IEF for each child is effective for one year. IEFs should be considered current and valid until the last day of the month in which the form was dated one year earlier. Each year the parent or guardian must complete a new IEF. Do not use *White-Out* or change a date or reuse a completed form.
4. If the parent or guardian completes the IEF before the actual date of enrollment for care, the center should collect a new IEF from the parent or guardian if more than two months have lapsed. For example, Johnny Jones' parents completed the IEF in January 2015. However, Johnny did not enroll and start attending the center until May 2015. A new IEF must be completed for Johnny at the time he actually started attending the center since more than two months lapsed between the completion of the form and the actual enrollment date.

5. The center must review, sign, and date the IEF as soon as it is received from the parent. Failure to do so may result in the reclassification of the child from the free or reduced category to the paid category.
6. The parent letter and the instructions must be given to the parent with the IEF. The center may copy the instructions on the back of the letter. The letter and the instructions outline the required information needed for completing the form. This letter is updated each year. Be sure to use the most current parent letter with the IEF. Pricing programs (centers that charge a separate fee for meals) do not use this parent letter. Contact the CACFP office at 800-733-6251 for a copy of the pricing letter.
7. Once approved for free or reduced meal benefits, a child is eligible for those benefits for one full year after the IEF has been signed and dated, regardless of changes in income or household size that may occur throughout the year. Centers may not re-evaluate IEFs when new income guidelines are issued in July of each year. For example, if a parent completes an IEF in January 2015, eligibility will be based on income guidelines issued in July 2014. When the new income guidelines are issued in July 2015, the center may not re-evaluate the IEF completed in January 2015 using the new income guidelines. The eligibility must continue to be based on the income guidelines in effect at the time the form was initially completed and reviewed.

If, during a monitoring review, it is found that children were incorrectly classified, or the IEF has expired, the center will have to pay money back to the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Therefore, it is very important that you review the IEFs carefully.

Income information must be kept confidential. The IEFs must be kept for three full years plus the current contract year after the date the final claim for the fiscal year was submitted. If audit findings have not been resolved, the IEFs must be kept as long as necessary to resolve the issues raised by the audit.

More information can be found in the booklet entitled Income Eligibility Guidance for Child Care Centers at <http://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/foodprograms/cacfp/lawsregs.php>

Reference: 7 CFR 226.23(e)(1)  
7 CFR 226.23(e)(4)  
7 CFR 226.23(f)