

## CRITERIA AND PROCEDURE

**BROAD SUBJECT: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**

**NO: GA-02-01**

**TITLE: Scanned Free and Reduced Applications**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:**  
**July 1, 2005**  
**Revised May 2015**  
**Revised February 2017**

### PURPOSE OF THIS CRITERIA/PROCEDURE -

Scanning of applications is increasingly being used by Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to assist with processing of meal applications. Most LEAs implementing a scanning system report reduced labor costs and reduced processing times and thus it is expected more LEAs will utilize scanning software. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) realizes the need for standard procedures to help minimize errors and help ensure compliance with applicable federal regulations.

### KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS -

**Batch:** Free and reduced meal applications separated into numbered stacks and processed as a set or a group.

**Free and Reduced Price Software:** Computer software programs that process free and reduced meal applications and assign the level of eligibility benefits.

**Scanning of Applications:** The use of software programs with electronic or optical technology designed specifically to capture an image of the completed free and reduced meal application for subsequent modification, integration or transmission.

**Quality Assurance Checks:** Manual edits of scanned application images to ensure correct data is captured in the images before the eligibility determination is made and to ensure all scanned applications in a batch were captured.

## CRITERIA AND/OR PROCEDURES -

1. Ensure process and procedures are in compliance with current Federal Regulations, including, but not limited to USDA's *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*, Chapter 7 Code of Federal Regulations and USDA and GaDOE policy memoranda. Ultimately, the local educational agency (LEA) is responsible for assuring that all procedures, including the use of scanning software, meet regulatory requirements.
2. Obtain State Agency (SA) approval of the free and reduced price meal application, instructions and letter to parents, if state prototype is not used.
3. Ensure scanning software is compatible with free and reduced price meal application software.
4. Check all applications for readability and required information prior to scanning. Obtain any missing information prior to processing, if necessary.
5. Separate applications into batches for scanning. The individual preparing batches for scanning must validate the number of applications in each batch. Investigate and correct any discrepancies between the batch counts.
6. Scanning procedures must specify that a determining official will sign or initial and date a sheet of paper that is attached to a batch of applications after the processing by free and reduced software. The cover page to each batch might include the batch number, the number of applications in the batch, the initials or signature of the staff member that checked the batch and the date the batch was scanned. Alternately, the official must sign and date the printed rosters.
7. Develop quality assurance checks that include manual edits of the scanned application images to ensure correct data is captured as an image before free and reduced software assigns eligibility determination. Make necessary edits.
8. Identify any questionable applications and place on hold until reviewed by designated staff member with knowledge of free and reduced rules and regulations.
9. Scanning procedures must ensure duplicate applications for family members are identified prior to processing to avoid skewing application counts (for example, affecting verification sample requirements). If possible, delete any duplicates before actually scanning.
10. Export scanned application data to free and reduced software only after application images have undergone quality assurance checks.
11. Ensure the free and reduced software captures the original date of approval and updates the status of applications to account for any changes, for example, withdrawal or transfer dates, and change or termination of benefits. These dates must be recorded and be readily retrievable for audit purposes. If the software cannot adequately capture this information, then a manual procedure must be in place.

12. File each batch of applications numerically by batch number. Paper copies of applications must be retrievable by school in the current year if requested by the SA or an auditor.
13. Develop access or security procedures to ensure confidentiality of the scanned and processed information.
14. Maintain paper copies of applications in the current year. However, as a precautionary measure, retain the paper copies until you have a secure and confidential backup system for electronic files. Further, ensure you have adequate backup of electronic files that include, at least, two copies stored in separate physical locations. Ensure back up files are updated routinely until the end of the school year.
15. Maintain electronically scanned copies for a minimum of five years after the submission of the final Claim for Reimbursement for the fiscal year, or longer as required for audit resolution. Retain paper copies of applications for schools on Provisions 1, 2 or 3 for five years beyond the establishment of a new base year, or longer as needed for audit resolution.
16. Arrange for your School Nutrition Area Consultant to examine your scanning procedures when you implement the process and complete Attachment A, providing a signed original copy to your Area Consultant.

## **AUTHORITY - FEDERAL**

Eligibility Manual for School Meals, USDA **July 2016.**

SP 10-2007: Update on Electronic Transactions in the Child Nutrition Program, May 1, 2007.

SP 12-2006: Commercial Software Used in School Nutrition Programs, February 9, 2006.

Administrative Review Guidance, Section V: General Program Compliance, Module: General Area – Reporting and Recordkeeping

[https://www.partnerweb.usda.gov/communities/cndpolicy2/CNDResources/AR\\_Resource\\_Manual\\_SY1617.docx](https://www.partnerweb.usda.gov/communities/cndpolicy2/CNDResources/AR_Resource_Manual_SY1617.docx)

Local Education Authority: \_\_\_\_\_

School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

### Criteria for Scanned and Stored Free and Reduced Price Applications

*Read the following statements about scanned and stored Free and Reduced Price Application process. All statements should be TRUE. If any of these statements are "FALSE," the scanning process is NOT acceptable and must be revised.*

CRITERIA STATEMENTS	TRUE	FALSE
1. The scanner system is accurately and reliably capturing the free and reduced price application information.		
2. Manual edits are in place to ensure accurate free and reduced price determinations. These edits should be completed anytime changes, such as updating the eligibility guidelines, are being made in the database.		
3. Cover pages of batches are being signed and dated or the printed rosters are being signed and dated.		
4. Access or security procedures are maintained to ensure confidentiality of the information.		
5. The paper copies of applications are maintained in any current year. Electronically scanned copies must be maintained for a minimum of five years after the submission of the final Claim for Reimbursement for the fiscal year, or longer as required for audit resolution.		
6. Procedures are developed to make an accurate count of the free and reduced price applications prior to the scanning of each batch. This count must be compared to applications successfully scanned to ensure that all applications are entered into the system.		
7. Paper copies of free and reduced applications are retrievable by school if requested by the state agency in the current year.		
8. Paper copies of the application are retained for any schools on Provisions 1/2/3 for five years beyond the establishment of a new base year, or longer as needed for audit resolution.		
9. Adequate backup is maintained for the electronic files. Two copies of the backup files must be stored in separate physical locations.		
10. There is no violation of federal and state laws, regulation or guidance.		

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_