



# KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY NUTRITION RECEIVES USDA AWARD**

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) –The U.S. Department of Agriculture ([USDA](http://www.usda.gov)) has recognized Kentucky's Division of School and Community Nutrition (SCN) with a Direct Certification Performance Award for substantial improvement in direct certification during the 2011-12 school year (SY). The recognition is accompanied by an award of \$214,917. The award money will be used to continue improving the overall quality of the direct certification process.

Direct certification is the process of certifying a child for a free meal status based on the household receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP), foster children and certain eligible Medicaid recipients. This award calculated the direct certification percentage based on reviewing all potential SNAP children who were eligible for a free meal status against those students identified as directly certified by SCN's participating sponsors.

Kentucky was one of eight states to receive the award. To be eligible, states had to submit a Letter of Intent to Compete and demonstrate a substantial increase in the direct certification rates from both SY 2009-2010 and SY 2010-2011. Kentucky's direct certification rate has shown continuous improvement, from 77% in SY 2009-10, to 87% in SY 2010-11 and 93% in SY 2011-12.

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“It was exciting to be recognized by the USDA,” said School and Community Nutrition Director Deanna Tackett. “Commissioner (Terry) Holliday has repeatedly spoken of Kentucky being a national leader in education and this is yet another example of our success.”

Several factors are responsible for the increase in the direct certification percentage. SCN initiated a new, web-based system in July 2011 that allows sponsors a secure means to download their direct certification file on a monthly basis. In addition, the Office of Knowledge, Information and Data Services (KIDS) collaborated with SCN staff to provide an interface with easy navigation that also provides automatic e-mail notifications once a new direct certification file has been posted. Within the direct certification file itself, the KIDS staff attempts to match the state student identifier to all students from the state enrollment database, which assists the sponsor with identifying students as directly certified.

Kentucky shared processes and best practices as the first state to be visited by the Direct Certification Technical Assistance Team.

“Although we have increased our direct certification percentage to 93%, our division will keep working to find ways to improve this process,” Tackett said.

#### **DIVISION OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY NUTRITION**

The Kentucky Department of Education’s Division of School and Community Nutrition oversees six child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program. The programs operate under authority of the United States Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Services ([www.usda.fns.gov](http://www.usda.fns.gov)). Various types of sponsors participate in the program, which includes private schools, public schools, camps, Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCI), Family Day Care Homes (FDCH) and day care centers (for profit and non-profit). Approximately 1,200 sponsors receive technical assistance, training and reimbursement of \$258 million annually in program expenditures.

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