

# Electronic Direct Certification

## Electronic Direct Certification

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## Additional Resources

- ISBE Electronic Direct Certification webpage  
<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Electronic-Direct-Certification-Process.aspx>

## Certification of Eligibility

Meal benefits can be issued using one of following methods:

- Categorical Eligibility using the Electronic Direct Certification System. Students receiving *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*; *Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) income –eligible Medicaid (began November 1, 2016)*; and *Foster children*.
- Categorical Eligibility using listing from Coordinator(s) – Homeless; Migrant; Runaway; Head Start; or Foster children. Between September 1 and June 30 annually, a direct certification report for Homeless, Migrant and Head Start is available in the Electronic Direct Certification System.
- Household Eligibility Application (HEA)
  - a. Based on household income.
  - b. Based on valid SNAP or TANF case numbers provided on the application including the extension of such benefits to ALL household members. **Since income levels are not known when a household provides a Medicaid number on a HEA or displays a Medicaid card, it is NOT allowable for determining eligibility for meal programs.**

Any households questioning their eligibility for FREE meals through direct certification by SNAP, TANF or income eligible Medicaid should contact the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS may be able to provide information to households as to why a student is listed as participating in SNAP, TANF or income eligible Medicaid. The DHS helpline is 800-843-6154 or visit and select [Family Community Resource Center](#) as the office type and county to obtain local office contact information.

This section of the handbook will only address the Categorical Eligibility using the Electronic Direct Certification System. Refer to the *Certification of Eligibility* section of this handbook for all other methods of determining meal benefit eligibility.

### Electronic Direct Certification System

Direct certification is a simplified process where LEAs certify students are receiving SNAP, TANF, income eligible Medicaid or are a Foster child. Any student able to be directly certified is eligible for FREE school meals/milk, without a household eligibility application, based on information provided by the State/local agency administering those programs for the entire school year, plus the carryover period of the next school.

Utilizing the Electronic Direct Certification System is a requirement of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). LEAs are required by the USDA to conduct direct certification a minimum of three times as follows: 1) At or around the beginning of the school year, 2) Three months after the initial effort, and 3) Six months after the initial effort. Students that are directly certified are not subject to verification. **For the direct certification system to be most effective, LEAs are encouraged to use each of the monthly files.**

The direct certification system may be used to directly certify HEAs submitted that have provided a SNAP/TANF case identification number and/or income information, but cannot be used to deny the initial application for meal benefits. For example, if a household completes a HEA with a SNAP case ID number, a staff person may attempt to locate that SNAP case ID number or student name within the Electronic Direct Certification System. If the case ID number or student is found, the student is directly certified for FREE meal benefits, and the application does not need to be processed. However, if the SNAP case ID number is not found, the HEA must be processed at face value as submitted by the household.

The system is set up to obtain eligibility information three different ways: 1) Annual or Monthly Match; 2) Sponsor File Upload Match; and 3) Single Child Match. Complete step-by-step instructions for each method are provided later in this section.

LEAs are required to maintain the PRINT report available from the Electronic Direct Certification System but also have access to the annual or monthly match and sponsor match data using a downloadable file. Such downloadable files will be beneficial for LEAs that have point-of-service software programs. Please check with the point-of-service software company for information regarding this process.

## Accessing the Electronic Direct Certification System

The Electronic Direct Certification System is securely accessible by LEAs participating in the Child Nutrition Programs through ISBE Web Application Security (IWAS) from the main dashboard of the Web-based Illinois Nutrition System (WINS).

**Step One:** Access IWAS at [www.isbe.net/nutrition](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition)

The screenshot shows the Illinois State Board of Education website. At the top left is the ISBE logo. The top navigation bar includes links for System Quick Links, Illinois Report Card, Careers at ISBE, Contact Us, and social media icons for Twitter and Facebook. A search bar and a Translate dropdown are also present. Below this is a dark blue navigation bar with icons and labels for HOME, ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, FAMILIES & STUDENTS, COMMUNITY & PARTNERS, NEWS & MEDIA, and TOPICS. The main content area is titled 'Nutrition and Wellness' and features a sidebar menu with items like Child and Adult Care Food Program, Enhanced Physical Education, Food Distribution, Resources, Webinars and Workshops, School Nutrition Programs, and Summer Food Service Program. The main text area contains a welcome message and a list of programs administered by the division. A red 'Log in to IWAS' button is prominently displayed and circled in blue.

**Step Two:** Enter *Login Name* and *Password* to access IWAS. For questions regarding IWAS, contact ISBE Technology Support at 217/558-3600.

**Step Three:** Once logged in to IWAS, click on *Systems Listing*.

Step Four: Select *Web-Based Illinois Nutrition System (WINS)*.

The screenshot shows the Illinois State Board of Education website. At the top, it says "Illinois State Board of Education" with the names of the Chairman and State Superintendent. Below that is a "My Systems" section. A navigation menu on the left includes options like Home, System Listing, Pending Sign Ups, etc. The main content area shows a tree view of system categories: Claims, ISBE Internal, and Web. Under the "Web" category, "Web-based Illinois Nutrition System (WINS)" is listed and circled in blue. To the right of this entry, there are icons for system description, due dates, and profile, along with an "Authorized" status indicator. A legend at the bottom explains the icons: a blue circle with an 'i' for System Description - Detailed, a calendar icon for Due Dates, and a person icon for Profile.

Step Five: From the dashboard of WINS, select *Direct Certification* located in the Reports area.

The screenshot shows the WINS dashboard with several tabs: Sponsor Tasks, Sponsor Applications & Participation, Site Applications, Claims & Monitoring, and Sponsor Info. The main content area is titled "Administrative Tasks" and is divided into four quadrants: Sponsor Tasks, Site Application Tasks, Reports, and Budget. The "Reports" quadrant contains a list of links, with "Direct Certification" circled in blue. The "Budget" quadrant shows the message "No WINS Budgets required."

Administrative Tasks	
<b>Sponsor Tasks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Batch Daily Meal Counts</li> <li>Batch Participation Detail</li> <li>Provision Group Maintenance</li> <li>Add New Site</li> <li>Close Inactive Site(s)</li> <li>Deactivate Site(s)</li> <li>Deactivate Sponsor</li> </ul>	<b>Site Application Tasks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enroll Site in New Program</li> <li>Edit Site Questionnaire</li> <li>Edit Program Participation</li> <li>Edit Participation Detail</li> </ul>
<b>Reports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waiver Submissions</li> <li>Participation / Claiming Summary By Site</li> <li>Applications Not Received</li> <li>WINS Participation Summary Report</li> <li>Direct Certification</li> <li>Deleted Sites</li> <li>Claim Data Report</li> </ul>	<b>Budget</b> <p>No WINS Budgets required.</p>

## Annual / Monthly Match - Public School Districts ONLY

Public schools districts will have access to ONE *Annual* report each school year, on or about July 1. The *Annual* report will identify students enrolled in the Student Information System (SIS) for the district. Student matches provided are based on the previous school year.

Public school districts have ONE *Monthly* report each calendar month, August through June, each school year. The *Monthly* report is available around the first of each month. For example, the August *Monthly* report will be available August 1. The *Monthly* report identifies students enrolled in the SIS for their district that are receiving SNAP, TANF, income eligible Medicaid or are Foster children that have been matched within the last month. This includes students newly enrolled in the school through SIS or newly receiving SNAP, TANF, income eligible Medicaid or foster child benefits. These students should be reviewed monthly to determine if FREE meal benefits may be provided to any students enrolled in the district. USDA requires that at a minimum direct certification be conducted near the beginning of the school year, three months after the initial effort and six months after the initial effort. The format of the *Monthly* report is similar to the *Annual* report with the minor change of *Annual* to *Monthly* in the title of the report. This method allows for schools to print and download the *Monthly* report.

**Please note, the *Monthly* files only list new students each month. The *Monthly* files are not cumulative lists that will increase or add on students from month to month.** Once a student is matched, the meal benefits are provided for the entire school year and the required carryover, unless subject to a reduction of benefits due to an error or verification activities. The student will NOT appear on the report for each subsequent month.

To obtain the *Annual* or *Monthly* match, once in the *Electronic Direct Certification System* follow the steps below.

Step One: Select *SNAP/TANF/MEDICAID* from the main menu on the upper left hand corner of the *Electronic Direct Certification System*.

Step Two: Select *Print* to view a copy of the *Annual* or *Monthly* match report. To print a copy, use the web browsers print option. ISBE requires that the report be printed, and filed at the school or district. Each LEA is required to maintain this documentation to support proof of eligibility of students, for three years plus the current year.

Step Three (Optional): Select *Download* to obtain the *Annual* or *Monthly* report a data format that may be uploaded to a Point-of-Sale (POS) Computer System or other system used to maintain eligibility information for the School-Based Child Nutrition Programs. For more information about downloading a file with the *Electronic Direct Certification System*, please reference the section of this guidance document titled *Downloading a File*.

Illinois State Board of Education

Direct Certification Home | ISBE HOME | LOGOUT

SESSION TIMEOUT 17:42

User Id: rramage RCDT: 35-050-1400-17 - Ottawa Twp HSD 140

Home

Direct Certification

**SNAP/TANF/MEDICAID**

File Upload Match

Single Child Match

CEP Validation File Match

Contact Us

Change RCDT

**Step One**

### Download File

Each public school district LEA will have a download file named Annual. This file is created one time per year (early July) by ISBE to compare students enrolled in the Student Information System (SIS) with the current SNAP/TANF/MEDICAID/FOSTER file. Public school districts are encouraged to update student eligibility using the Annual file first.

A Monthly file is created for all public schools the first of the month for each month thereafter (September – June). The August file will compare to the previous school year SIS records. The September- June Monthly file will compare to the current school year SIS records. A zero record match may result from either no new matches or a district not having a current school year SIS record. Each Monthly file is NOT a cumulative file, and must be used in conjunction with the Annual Report.

If any LEA uploads a file with student information to match to the SNAP/TANF database, the download file(s) will be named Sponsor File with the appropriate date.

For each file, the LEA must maintain the documentation from the Printed Report. The option to Download the data is available to ease transfer of data into another computer program.

Students found in this manner are directly certified for free meal benefits. Direct Certification benefits are extending to other household members when the status is SNAP, TANF, or income Eligible MEDICAID. There is no extension of benefits for Foster eligibility status.

#### SNAP/Tanf/Medicaid Monthly/Annual Match Files

File Type	Approximate Number of Records	Match Date	Access Date	Download	Print
Sponsor File	360	07/11/2018	07/11/2018		
Sponsor File	360	07/11/2018	07/11/2018		
Annual	257	07/01/2018	07/02/2018		

**Step Three**

**Step Two**

Step Four: Update the current school year’s benefit issuance documentation with this information. USDA requires LEAs to identify those students directly certified by SNAP separately than those that are TANF, income eligible Medicaid or Foster children. ISBE recommends that LEAs maintain all types (SNAP, TANF, income eligible Medicaid or are Foster children) separately, if possible. Enter FREE eligibility for each child that appears on the *Annual* or *Monthly* match report currently enrolled in the school/district. These students do not need a Household Eligibility Application, and are approved for FREE meal benefits for the entire school year.

## Sponsor File Upload Match - All Sponsors (Public and Private)

All sponsors may upload a comma-delimited file to the Electronic Direct Certification System (Detailed instructions to create a comma delimited file are provided later in this section). Once the file is uploaded, a *Sponsor File* is created identifying students on the sponsor-created upload file that are receiving SNAP, TANF, income eligible Medicaid or are Foster children. There are no limits to the number of files that may be uploaded to the Electronic Direct Certification System. All nonpublic sponsors, MUST conduct direct certification on all enrolled students. ISBE recommends a *Sponsor File Upload* match for this purpose, and to meet the requirement to conduct direct certification a minimum of three times each school year. A *Single Child Match* (discussed next) may also be used for this purpose, but ALL enrolled students must be checked at least three times as detailed above.

To utilize the Sponsor File Upload match, log into the *Electronic Direct Certification System* and follow the steps below. Before going into the Electronic Direct Certification System, LEAs will need to create their comma-delimited file; instructions are later in this section.

Step One: Select *File Upload Match* from the main menu on the upper left hand corner of the *Electronic Direct Certification System*.

Step Two: Select *Choose File* from the main menu on the lower right hand corner of the *Electronic Direct Certification System*. Select the comma-delimited file created for this upload and click *Open*.

Step Three: The file will appear in the *Select a File* area of the screen. Click *Upload*.

The screenshot shows the Illinois State Board of Education's Electronic Direct Certification System interface. The page title is "File Upload Match". The left sidebar contains a menu with "SNAP/TANF/MEDICAID" circled in red. The main content area includes instructions for file uploads, a list of required fields (First name, Last name, Gender, Birth date), and a "Select a File to Upload" section. In this section, the "Choose File" button is circled in blue, and the "Upload" button is circled in purple. Three callout boxes labeled "Step One", "Step Two", and "Step Three" point to these respective elements.

Step Four: The system will process the request. Once complete, users will automatically be taken to the *SNAP/TANF/MEDICAID* page. This process will take just a few minutes. The name of each file uploaded will be *Sponsor File* with the date and time. The most recent *Sponsor File* is the first file listed.

Step Five: Select *Print* to obtain a copy of the *Sponsor File*. The results of each search will appear on the screen. Exact and close matches will be displayed. View the list of students, to determine if a match is found.

Step Six (Optional): Select *Download* to obtain the *Sponsor File* in a format that may be uploaded to a Point-of-Sale (POS) Computer System or other system used to maintain eligibility information for the School-Based Child Nutrition Programs. For more information about downloading a file with the *Electronic Direct Certification System*, please reference the section of this guidance document titled *Downloading a File*.

Step Seven: Update the current school year’s benefit issuance documentation with this information. Enter FREE eligibility for each child that appears on the *Sponsor Report* currently enrolled in the school/district. A Household Eligibility Application is NOT needed for these students. Students are approved to receive FREE meal benefits for the entire school year.

## Single Child Match - All Sponsors (Public and Private)

All sponsors can search for individual student(s) who may receive SNAP, TANF, income eligible Medicaid or are Foster children to determine FREE eligibility. An LEA may search using the first and last name with an optional city or via the case id number for SNAP, TANF, or income eligible Medicaid. The *Single Child Match* report will identify those students that the LEA selected. All students listed on the *Single Child Match* report receive SNAP, TANF, income eligible Medicaid or are Foster children and are eligible for FREE meal/milk benefits if enrolled in the school. There are no limits to the number of single child matches that an LEA may conduct. It is suggested that LEAs limit each *Single Child Match* report to eight students.

Step One: Select *Single Child Match* from the main menu on the upper left hand corner of the *Electronic Direct Certification System*.

Step Two: Select *Name and Address* or *Case Number* to search for an individual child. Enter the first and last name with an optional city or the case number. Click *Search*.

The screenshot displays the Illinois State Board of Education's web application. The top navigation bar includes the logo and the text 'Illinois State Board of Education'. Below the logo is a vertical menu with options: Home, Direct Certification, SNAP/TANF/MEDICAID, **Single Child Match** (circled in red), and other options. A 'Step One' callout box points to the 'Single Child Match' menu item. The main content area is titled 'Single Child Match' and contains instructions: 'An LEA may look up a single student with the following search criteria: 1. first name, last name, and city.' Below this, it states: 'When you look up a single child by Name and Address, the first and last name are required fields. The city is an optional field.' A blue oval highlights the 'Type of Search' section, which has two radio buttons: 'Name and Address' (selected) and 'Case Number'. Below this is the 'Search Criteria' section with input fields for 'First Name \*', 'Last Name \*', and 'City', followed by a 'Search' button. A 'Step Two' callout box points to these search criteria fields.

Step Three: The results of each search will appear on the screen. Exact and close matches will be displayed. View the list of children, and if a match is found (a child enrolled in the school), select *Add to Report*.

**Close Matches**

**Step Three**

Name	Address	Birth Date	Sex	Case Number/Identifier	Assistance Source		
		09/09/2016	F		SNAP	<a href="#">Add To Report</a>	CLOSE
		05/16/2001	F		SNAP	<a href="#">Add To Report</a>	CLOSE

Step Four: Once a child is added to a report, the following choices will appear: *Edit Report, Print Report, or Clear Report.*

- *Edit Report:* A list of the children added to the report will appear. From this screen, a child may be removed from the report.
- *Print Report:* Select *Print* to obtain a copy for school/district records. This is required for documentation of FREE meal/milk benefits.
- *Clear Report:* This selection will remove all children from the report.

Step Five: Update the current school year’s benefit issuance documentation with this information. Enter FREE eligibility for each child that appears on the *Single Child Lookup Report* currently enrolled in the school/district. A Household Eligibility Application is NOT needed for these students. They are approved to receive FREE meal benefits for the entire school year.

## Using the Direct Certification Results

### Flexibility in Determining the Effective Date

Children are eligible for free or reduced price benefits on the date their eligibility is determined. Flexibility exists to allow LEAs to move the effective date of eligibility back under various circumstances. ([SP51-2014 Eligibility Effective Date for Directly Certified Students](#)). LEAs processing applications or determining eligibility through direct certification while using this flexibility must do so consistently for all children, in all participating schools and Programs. LEAs electing to exercise this flexibility must notify ISBE via the online application submitted annually through WINS. To be used for this purpose, the data file must be generated and received by the LEA in the current school year.

If the LEA elects to exercise the flexibility, the LEA must:

- Do so consistently for all the direct certification methods described herein (i.e., automated data matching, letter method, and lists or other forms of documentation);
- Apply the direct certification eligibility effective date flexibility consistently to all students directly certified across all participating schools and school meal programs within the LEA;
- Document the effective date used, such as a date stamp, to document the date lists or letters from other agencies were received, or the documented and traceable run date of automated match files or recipient benefit files from another appropriate agency;

- If categorical eligibility is based on SNAP, TANF or income eligible Medicaid, the extended eligibility provision applies;
- Refund any money paid by or on behalf of the student for reimbursable meals or milk during the period from the free meal eligibility effective date through the date the direct certification is actually implemented at the local school, including forgiving accrued debt, for any meals or milk adjusted to free due to the change in effective date. The LEA can only claim those meals or milk at the free reimbursement rate if the student is given a refund or the debt is discharged; and
- Notify ISBE. This appears as a question on the sponsor questionnaire in WINS.

## Extension of Benefits

All students that reside within the same household as a child that is directly certified based on SNAP, TANF, or income eligible Medicaid benefits are eligible for FREE meals/milk as well.

**Extension of benefits does NOT apply to Foster children benefits.**

### Documentation

It is the responsibility of the LEA to have documents to backup the results of direct certification. [Documentation of this extension](#) of meal/milk benefits, as well as all direct certification reports must be maintained for three years plus the current, except that if audit findings have not been resolved, the records shall be retained beyond the three-year period as long as required for the resolution of the issues raised by the audit. The *Annual* report is for the entire school district not by school building. This report may need to be shared among all of the school buildings and may only be shared with those who work directly with certification of meal benefits. All records must be maintained in a confidential and secure manner. Additionally, each report will be dated to indicate the date in which a student's certification for FREE meals or milk can begin.

All of the reports will include:

- Student ID (Public Schools Only – Annual and Monthly Reports)
- Last, First, and Middle Name
- Birth date
- Gender
- School Name (Public Schools Only – Annual and Monthly Reports)
- Agency Identifier
- Street address
- City
- State
- Zip code
- Match Rule - *Exact Matches* (E) *Close Matches* (C)
- Assistance Source (SNAP, TANF, (income eligible) Medicaid or Foster)

All matches should be reviewed in order to determine students on the list are currently enrolled in the school and/or district. For the Annual Report, data gathered from SIS is from the previous school year; therefore, there could be students that match but no longer attend the school. For *Close Matches*, LEAs should be reviewing these matches to determine what data matches their student(s) information in order to determine which, if any, of the *Close Matches* are students enrolled in their school. If an LEA determines a student on the report is not enrolled in the school, indicate on the report in some way that that student is not enrolled in the school.

While every attempt to limit duplicate matches of students within the electronic direct certification system is made, if a duplicate record appears for a student (for example, the student is listed with both a SNAP case number as well as a foster child), SNAP benefits always take precedence. Please use the following as the hierarchy of assistance sources:

1. SNAP
2. TANF
3. Income-Eligible Medicaid
4. Foster (no extension of benefits)
5. Homeless (no extension of benefits)
6. Migrant (no extension of benefits)
7. Head Start (no extension of benefits)

#### Scenario One

The July *Annual* report is accessed and the student appears under the assistance source of Foster. The household is notified of the FREE meal eligibility. The school records reflect direct certification by Foster. On the September *Monthly* report, the same student is listed under the assistance source of SNAP. In this instance, the school records should be updated to reflect directly certified by SNAP. The household does NOT need to be notified, as meal benefits remain unchanged.

#### Scenario Two

A *Sponsor File* is created by the LEA. A student appears on the file duplicate times, under the assistance sources of TANF and SNAP. In this instance, the school records should be updated to reflect directly certified via SNAP. The household is notified of their eligible for FREE meal benefits and extension of benefits to additional household students should reflect directly certified by SNAP.

Once reports are reviewed, households must be notified that their child(ren) have been approved for FREE meal/milk benefits. A [sample notification letter](#) is available online. The Direct Certification Notification Letter will include the child(ren) located through the Electronic Direct Certification System as well as any child(ren) within the same family that are enrolled in the district that is providing benefits through the extension of benefits as detailed above.

Notification to the households regarding eligibility determined through the Electronic Direct Certification System is required. The LEA must notify the household that:

- The student(s) is/are eligible for FREE benefits;
- No further action is required including the completion of the Household Eligibility Application;
- Additional student(s) in the household may receive FREE meal/milk benefits through the extension of benefits provision of the USDA for SNAP, TANF or income eligible Medicaid, if the school is notified of such student(s); and
- Households should notify the LEA if the household wants to decline the meal/milk benefits.

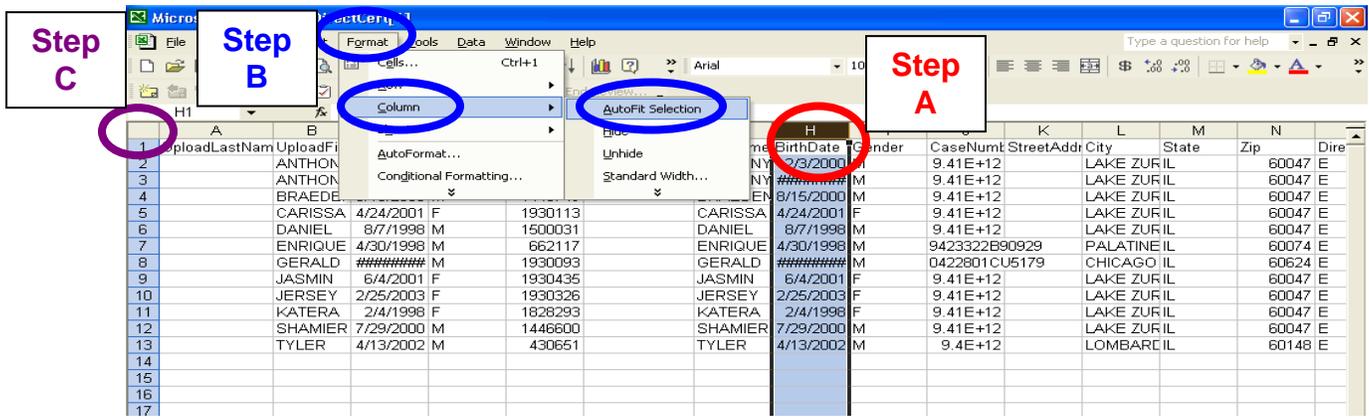
Households in which at least one student is directly certified and all students in that household are part of the same family **do not** need to be provided a Household Eligibility Application. For this purpose “family” is defined by the USDA as “a group of related or nonrelated individuals who are not residents of an institution or boarding house, but who are living as one economic unit.” There is a [sample form](#) for LEAs to document this extension of the categorically eligible SNAP/TANF/income eligible Medicaid benefits for FREE meal/milk benefits.

All directly certified students are eligible for FREE meal/milk benefits unless a parent/guardian requests to not receive those benefits. If a parent/guardian requests not to receive benefits for one or all of their children, we recommend such requests be made in writing with the signature of the parent/guardian as well as the date of such request. This will provide the necessary documentation as to why a student is not receiving the FREE meal/milk benefits. The child(ren) must be claimed in the category the parent/guardian has requested.

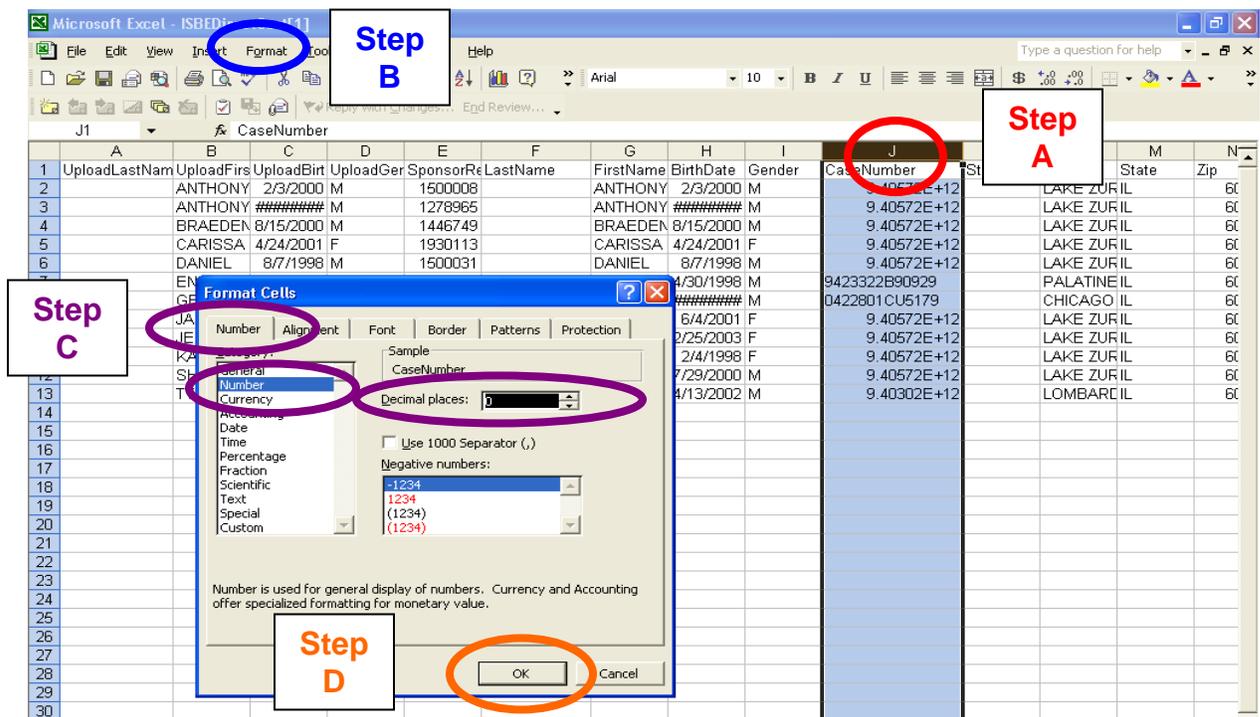
## Downloading a Direct Certification File

If schools/districts choose to download a file in the Electronic Direct Certification System, *in* some instances, the information will be displayed in a format that must be modified. School technology staff can assist with most of these issues. A few of the common issues found are listed below:

- 1) The fields are symbols instead of numbers or the cells do not show the entire field of data.
  - a. This can be fixed for each column by highlighting the column to be fixed (place cursor over the letter at the top of the column, an arrow will appear, then click with the mouse to highlight that column).
  - b. Once the column is highlighted, select *Format* at the top of the screen, then select *Column*. Additional options will appear. Select *Auto Fit Selection*. The column will now display all data.
  - c. This can also be fixed for the entire sheet. Using the mouse, go to the upper left hand corner of the Excel sheet and click on the box between the letter A and the number 1; this will highlight the entire sheet. (See Step C.) Then follow Step B.



- 2) The Case Number (Column J) looks like symbols. To correct this problem follow the instructions below on the downloaded file before saving as Excel:
  - a. Highlight Column J (place cursor over the letter J at the top of the column, an arrow will appear, then left-click with the mouse to highlight that column).
  - b. Click *Format* at the top of the screen and click on *Cells*.
  - c. A *Format Cells* dialogue box will appear. Select *Numbers*. Under *Category*, select *Number*. Then modify the number of decimal places to zero.
  - d. Click *OK*.



## How to Create a Comma-Delimited File

There are two options for creating a comma-delimited file. The first option is to use Microsoft® Excel and the second option is to use Notepad. Below are instructions for both options. Also keep in mind that the required fields are extremely case sensitive and will not download if any fields are entered incorrectly or out of order.

A common error found is that a header row, identifying each column of data, is included. For example, the first row will read First Name, Last Name, Gender, and Birth Date. The header row must be removed before saved as a comma delimited file for uploading.

### EXCEL

Follow the steps below to create a comma-delimited file using Microsoft® Excel.

**Step One:** Open Microsoft® Excel.

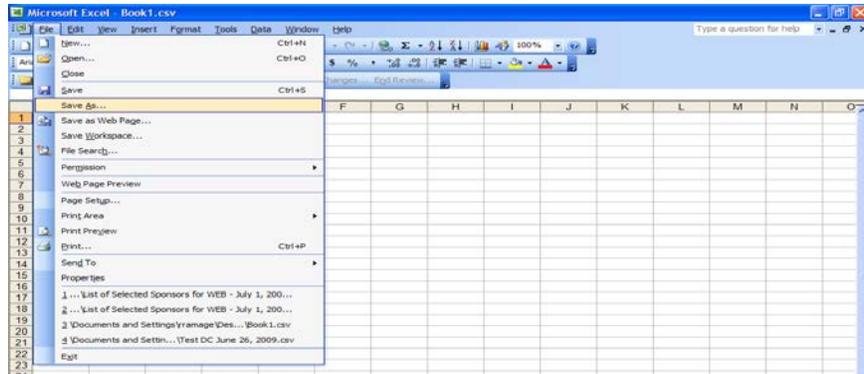


**Step Two:** Enter the required data. The file format is as follows:

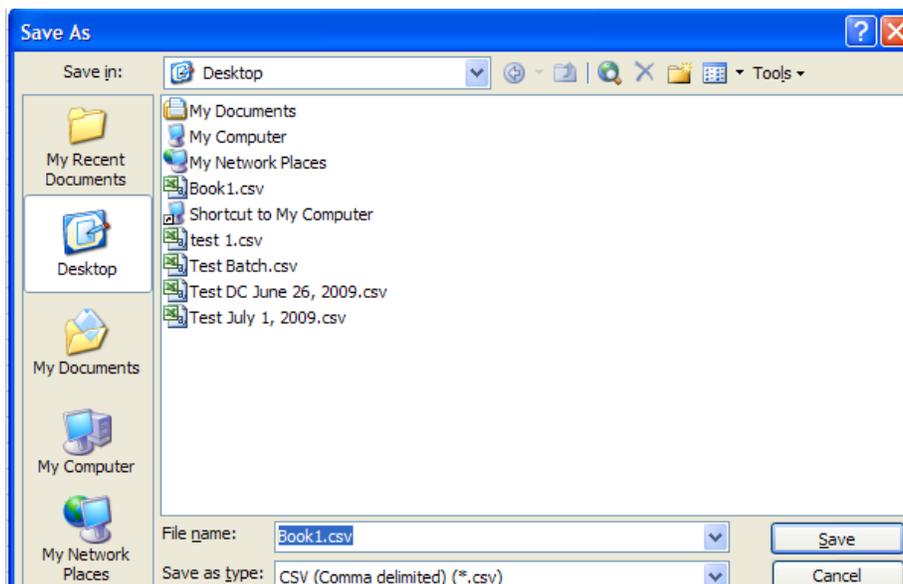
- Column A: First Name
- Column B: Last Name
- Column C: Gender (F = Female, M = Male)
- Column D: Birth Date (Month/Day/Year, 01/01/1970)
- Column E: Unique Identifier (Optional)
- Column F: Unique Identifier (Optional)

The number of students entered will vary by sponsor. Once the file contains all of the required data for all students to be uploaded, proceed to the next step. **NOTE:** File cannot contain a header row and must follow this format exactly.

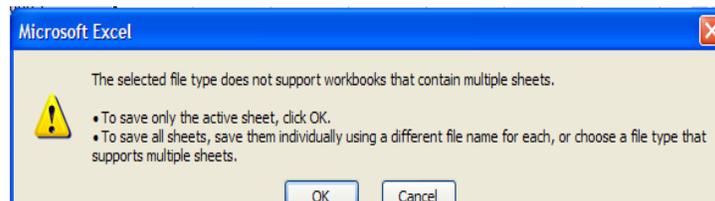
**Step Three:** Select *File, Save As* from the Excel menu.



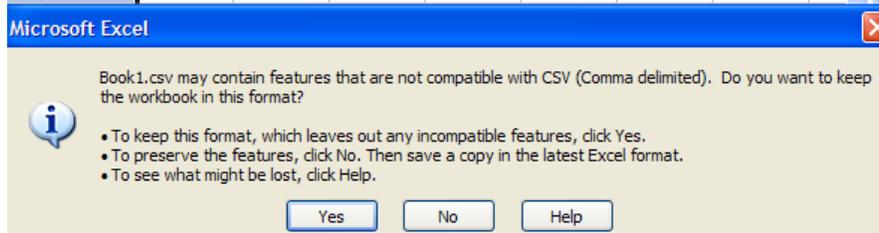
**Step Four:** Enter a file name as requested. For the *Save as Type*, select *CSV (comma-delimited) (\*.csv)*, and then click *Save*.



**Step Five:** The following message will appear. Click *OK* to save only the active sheet.



**Step Six:** The following message will appear. Click Yes to keep the file in the CSV format.

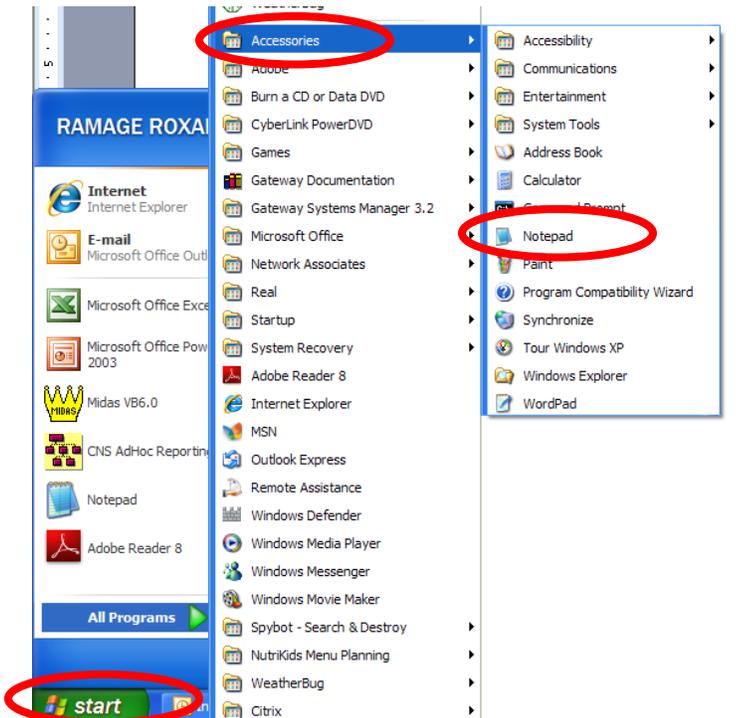


**Step Seven:** The file is now ready to upload to the Electronic Direct Certification System. Follow the directions for the *Sponsor File Upload* found in this Guidance Document.

## NOTEPAD

Follow the steps below to create a comma delimited file using Notepad.

**Step One:** Open Notepad. It can be accessed by clicking on *Start, Accessories*, and then *Notepad*.



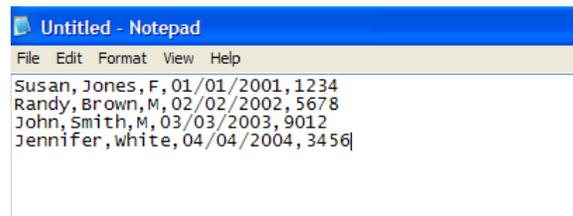
**Step Two:** Enter the required data. The file format is as follows:

First Name, Last Name, Gender (F = Female, M = Male), Birth Date (Month/day/year, 01/01/1970), Unique Identifier (Optional), Column E: Unique Identifier (Optional)

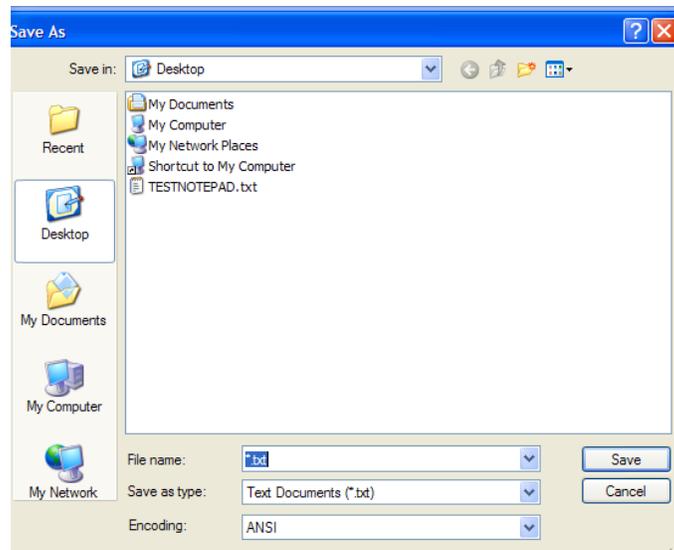
**Example:** Susan,Jones,F,01/01/2001,12345,LincolnElemSch

DO NOT include spaces in the file format.

After each record, select *Enter*.



**Step Three:** Enter a *File Name* and select *Save*. Make sure that the *Save As* type is *Text Documents (\*.txt)*.



**Step Four:** The file is now ready to upload to the Electronic Direct Certification System. Follow the directions for the *Sponsor File Upload* found in this Guidance Document.

