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Electronic Funds Transfer and Claimant Certification (M)

[See POLICY ALERT No. 221]

6470.01R Electronic Funds Transfer and Claimant Certification (M)

A. Definitions – N.J.S.A. 40A:5-2 and N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.2

For the purpose of Policy and Regulation 6470.01:

"Automated clearing house (ACH) transfer" means an electronic funds transfer initiated by the Board of Education authorizing a banking institution to push funds from the Board of Education bank account(s) into a vendor or claimant's bank account, executed through the ACH electronic clearing and settlement system used for financial transactions.

"Board of Education" means a Board of Education as defined by the "Public School Contracts Law," N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-1 et seq.

"Charge account" or "charge card" means an account, linked to a credit card issued by a specific vendor to which goods and services may be charged on credit, that must be paid when a statement is issued.

"Check" means the instrument by which moneys of the Board of Education is disbursed.

"Chief Executive Officer" means the Superintendent of Schools.

"Chief Financial Officer" means the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary.

"Claimant certification" or "vendor certification" means verification of claims pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:19-3.

"Disbursement" means any payment of moneys, including any transfer of funds, by any means.



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"Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)" means technology that provides transaction related details, including invoice number(s), pay dates, and other identifying information as appropriate for each transaction.

"Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)" means any approved method of transferring moneys permitted by N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq. that does not involve the physical presentation of a paper check, draft, or similar paper instrument including, but not limited to, wire transfers, e-checks, automated clearing house (ACH) transfers, and transactions initiated by phone or fax.

"Electronic Funds Transfer and Indemnification Agreement" means a signed legally binding indemnification agreement renewed on an annual basis between a Board of Education and a banking institution authorized to conduct business in New Jersey, which authorizes that institution to access bank accounts for the purpose of conducting EFTs through the ACH operating system.

"Governing body" means the Board of Education.

"Internal controls" means fiscal and operational controls that ensure safe and proper use of a standard EFT system and mitigate the potential for fraud and abuse. For purpose of N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq., internal controls shall include technological safeguards and cyber security practices, as well as processes affected by the governing body, management, and other personnel establishing fiscal and operational controls that reduce exposure to risk of misappropriation.

"Local Unit" means any county, municipality, special district, or any public body corporate and politic created or established under any law of this State by or on behalf of any one or more counties or municipalities, or any board, commission, department, or agency of any of the foregoing having custody of funds, but shall not include a school district.

"National Automated Clearing House Association (NACHA) file" means a file, formatted to NACHA specifications, which contains instructions for transferring funds between accounts.



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"Payment documentation" means such documentation, including evidence of approvals and certifications, as is required by N.J.S.A. 40A:5-16.b, 40A:5-17, and 18A:19.1 et seq., and N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq. prior to the legal paying out of moneys.

"Procurement card" or "P-card" means an account or physical card that represents an account governed by characteristics specific to a procurement card. These characteristics include limits of time, amount, access, and purchase category controlled by the local unit, local authority, or county college in accordance with an agreement with an issuer. While such cards may have the appearance of a credit card, such as Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover, such general-purpose cards do not feature the controls that procurement cards have and as such are not permitted under N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq. A "Procurement card" or "P-card" may not be used by a Board of Education.

"Reconciliation of activity" means the process used to determine that all transactions utilizing standard EFT technologies are accurate, authorized, and allocable to encumbered appropriations.

"Standard electronic funds transfer technologies" means technologies that facilitate the transfer of funds, other than a transaction originated by check, draft, or similar paper instrument, initiated by means such as, but not limited to, an electronic terminal, telephone, computer, or magnetic tape for the purpose of ordering, instructing, or authorizing a financial institution to debit or credit an account, and incorporate, at a minimum, internal controls set forth in rules promulgated by the Local Finance Board. No general purpose credit or debit card shall be considered a standard EFT technology.

"Supervisory review" means the process performed by an individual in a supervisory capacity to confirm the propriety and accuracy of standard EFT technologies used by subordinates.

"Transaction" means any activity that may result in demand for payment.



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“Warrant” means the draft or check of any Board of Education used in warranting disbursement of moneys and shall, in every instance, be evidenced by the issuance of a check of the Board of Education. In no instance shall it be necessary for the Board of Education to refer to, or issue, a check separate and distinct from the warrant.

B. Authorization to Use Standard Electronic Funds Transfer Technologies for Electronic Funds Transfers – N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.3

1. The Board of Education adopts Policy and Regulation 6470.01 to permit the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary to use only the forms of standard EFT technologies that are approved for New Jersey Boards of Education for EFTs for payment of claims pursuant to N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq. and 5:31-4.1, implementing N.J.S.A. 40A:5-16.5.
 - a. A Board of Education may not utilize procurement cards, charge cards, charge accounts, or any payment services such as PayPal or Venmo.
2. N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq. does not authorize a Board of Education to exceed the maximum bid thresholds or other limits set forth in the Public School Contracts Law, N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-1 et seq.
3. Providers of ACH and wire transfer services are to be financial institutions chartered by Federal or State authority. ACH and wire transfer services must be provided by a financial institution covered by the Governmental Unit Deposit Protection Act (GUDPA), N.J.S.A. 17:9-41 et seq.

C. Standard Electronic Funds Transfer Technologies; Internal Controls and Conditions for Use – N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.4

1. The Board of Education will only initiate and approve electronic funds in accordance with N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq. Standard EFT technologies shall incorporate, at minimum, the following features and safeguards:



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a. The ability to designate specific individuals able to initiate disbursements, barring those not authorized to initiate disbursements from doing so.

(1) The Board of Education designates and approves the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary to be responsible to initiate a claim for payment using an EFT method that has been duly approved in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:19-1 et seq. and Policy and Regulation 6470.01.

(2) Each claim for payment approved or ratified by the Board shall indicate any payment made using an EFT technology, the type of EFT technology that will or has been utilized in paying the claim, along with a reference that permits tracking.

b. The ability to designate individuals who may authorize disbursement and segregate initiation and authorization functions. Password or other security controls shall be in place to restrict access based on an individual's authorized role.

(1) The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall initiate a claim for payment by presenting a claim that has been approved by the Board, to be paid using an EFT technology. The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall submit the claim for payment with all supporting documentation to the Superintendent of Schools or a designee who is not under the direct supervision of the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary.

(2) The Superintendent of Schools or a designee who is not under the direct supervision of the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall review the claim for payment and authorize, in writing, the EFT claim that was initiated by the School Business



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Administrator/Board Secretary before the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary pays the claim using an EFT method.

- (a) The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary will not pay a claim using an EFT method without written authorization from the Superintendent of Schools or the designee.

(3) The Board of Education shall annually approve the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary as the person responsible to initiate a claim for payment and the Superintendent of Schools or the designee not under the direct supervision of the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary as the person responsible to review a claim for payment presented by the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary and authorize the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary to make the payment using an EFT method.

(4) The Superintendent of Schools or the designee shall ensure passwords and security codes are in place to restrict access based on an individual's role.

c. The ability to confirm receipt of payment by the vendor.

- (1) The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall receive confirmation from the vendor an EFT payment has been received by the vendor. Documentation supporting receipt of an EFT payment received by a vendor shall be included with the claim's supporting documentation.

d. The ability to bar automatic debits from Board of Education accounts.

- (1) The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall require all banking institutions approved by the



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Board of Education prohibit any automatic debits from any Board of Education bank account as each individual disbursement to a vendor must be preceded by instructions submitted to the bank.

- e. The ability for appropriate officials to view transaction history, generate activity reports, and conduct supervisory reviews of all transactions.
- (1) On no less than a weekly basis, the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall prepare an Activity Report on all EFT-based transactions.
 - (2) All Activity Reports prepared by the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall be submitted and reviewed by an employee or non-employee (i.e. school auditor, accountant, Board President, etc.) approved annually by the Board of Education who is not under the direction of the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary and who is not empowered to authorize EFT transactions.
 - (3) The Activity Report shall include, but not be limited to
 - (a) The name of the payee;
 - (b) The Board approval date approving the payment of the claim;
 - (c) The fund and account the payment is being paid from;
 - (d) The technology utilized in each EFT transaction; and
 - (e) The date of payment.



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- (4) A copy of all Activity Reports shall be provided to the Board of Education at the first regular monthly Board meeting following any EFT transactions.
 - (5) All EFT Activity Reports and evidence of the review by the employee or non-employee (i.e. school auditor, accountant, etc.) designated and approved annually by the Board of Education who is not under the direction of the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary and who is not empowered to authorize EFT-based transactions are to be maintained and available for audit by the Board of Education's independent auditor.
 - (6) The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary or designee shall perform a monthly reconciliation of the reviewed/approved weekly EFT Activity Reports of the EFT transactions appearing on bank statements and in the accounting records (i.e. general ledger, bank reconciliations, list of bills approved by Board, etc.).
 - (a) Evidence to support the performance of this monthly review must be maintained by the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary and available for audit by the Board of Education's independent auditor.
- f. The ability to back-up transaction data and store such data offline.
- (1) The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall ensure all EFT transaction data is backed-up and stored offline.
 - (a) However, any ACH file that is in plain text format must not be stored on a Board of



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Education's local computer past the time the file is transmitted to the bank.

g. Measures to mitigate risk of duplicate payment.

(1) The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall ensure an EFT payment is not duplicated by any other means.

(2) More than one EFT payment to the same vendor ratified or approved for payment by the Board of Education will be reviewed by the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary prior to payment to ensure there is no duplicate or multiple payments for the same goods or services.

h. The creation and maintenance of an audit trail, such that transaction history, including demands for payment and payment initiation, authorization, and confirmation, can be independently tracked and detailed through the use of an EDI or functional equivalent.

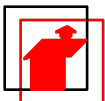
(1) The Board of Education's EDI or functional equivalent will have the ability to create and maintain the required audit trail.

i. The following cyber security best practice framework shall be followed:

(1) Any system supporting a standard EFT shall:

(a) Be hosted on dedicated servers or in a FedRAMP Moderate Impact Level Authorized Cloud. When using cloud services, the vendor shall check provider credentials and contracts;

(b) Encrypt stored and transmitted financial information and personal identification



information;

- (c) Maintain only critical personal identification information. Social Security numbers shall not be utilized as identification numbers for system purposes;
 - (d) Employ a resilient password policy;
 - (e) Undergo regular and stress testing;
 - (f) Have regular security updates on all software and devices carried out;
 - (g) Have back-up plans, information disposal, and disaster recovery procedures created and tested;
 - (h) Undergo regular security risk assessments for detecting compromises, along with regular monitoring for vulnerabilities, with necessary patches and updates being implemented; and
 - (i) Develop a Cybersecurity Incident Response Plan.
- (2) The managing organization shall:
- (a) Check provider credentials and contracts when using cloud services;
 - (b) Educate staff in good security measures and perform employee background checks; and
 - (c) Create a computer security incident response team, generally called a CSIRT.



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j. Financial institution providers of standard EFT technologies shall provide annual evidence of satisfactory internal control to the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary;

k. ACH payments shall follow rules set forth by the National Automated Clearing House Association (NACHA) or an equivalent successor banking industry standard. In addition, the following safeguards shall be instituted:

(1) All EFTs through the ACH must utilize EDI technology and be subject to an Electronic Funds Transfer and Indemnification Agreement;

(2) A user that can generate an ACH file shall neither have upload rights nor access that permits editing of a vendor routing number or vendor account number;

(3) Each edit to vendor ACH information shall be approved by a separate individual and be logged showing the user editing the data, date stamp, IP address, and the approval of the edit;

(4) Any ACH file that is in plain text format shall not be stored on a local computer past the time transmitted to a bank; and

(5) If supported by the Board of Education's financial institution(s), said entities shall avail themselves of the ability to recall ACH payments via NACHA file.

2. The Board of Education will only utilize standard EFT technologies upon instituting, at a minimum, the following fiscal and operational controls:

a. Policy and Regulation 6470.01 shall be adopted authorizing and governing the use of standard EFT technologies consistent with N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq.;



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- b. The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall ensure that the minimum internal controls set forth in N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq., along with those internal controls set forth in Policy and Regulation 6470.01 are in place and being adhered to;
- c. Initiation and authorization roles shall be segregated, and password-restricted.
 - (1) The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall be responsible for initiating all EFTs.
 - (2) When the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary initiates an EFT, the Superintendent or a designee not under the direct supervision of the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall be responsible for authorization of the EFT.
 - (a) The School Business Administrator/Board Secretary will not pay a claim using an EFT method without written authorization from the Superintendent of Schools or the designee.
 - (3) The Board of Education may designate and approve a backup officer/staff member in the event the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary or Superintendent or a designee not under the direct supervision of the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary who is approved to authorize the EFT payment is unavailable.
 - (4) All payment of claims, ordinances, or resolutions enacted pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:5-17.b shall, at a minimum, comply with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.4.
 - (5) N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.4 shall not be interpreted to prevent a Board of Education from requiring, authorizing,



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and approving more than one officer to authorize an EFT.

- d. No Board of Education shall disburse funds unless the goods and services are certified as having been provided pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:19-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.1 et seq.
- e. On no less than a weekly basis, Activity Reports on all transactions utilizing standard EFT technologies shall be reviewed by an individual designated and approved by the Board that is not under the direct supervision of the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary and is not empowered to initiate or authorize EFTs.
 - (1) Reconciliations shall be performed on a monthly basis.
 - (2) All Activity Reports generated by the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary shall be monitored by another individual designated and approved by the Board who is not under the supervision of the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary.
- f. A user that uploads an ACH file shall check the amounts and recipients against a register displaying ACH payments.

D. Claimant Certification; When Payment Can Be Made Without Claimant Certification - N.J.A.C. 5:30-9A.6

- 1. Claimant certification for a Board of Education shall be in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:19-3 and rules promulgated by the New Jersey Department of Education.

E. Automated Clearing House (ACH) Transactions

- 1. Providers of ACH and wire-transfer services must be financial institutions chartered by a State or Federal agency, with the further



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requirement that financial institutions providing ACH and wire transfer services be covered under the GUDPA, N.J.S.A. 17:9-41 et seq.

2. ACH payments shall follow rules set forth by the National Automated Clearing House Association (NACHA) or equivalent successor banking industry standard.
3. EFTs through ACH must utilize EDI technology which provides transaction related details including invoice numbers, pay dates, and other identifying information as appropriate for each transaction.
4. The Board of Education must approve an ACH Origination Agreement with the financial institution(s).
5. Users authorized to generate an ACH file shall neither have upload rights nor access permitting editing of a vendor routing number or vendor account number.
6. Each edit to vendor ACH information must be approved by a separate individual and be logged showing the user editing the data, date stamp, IP address, and the approval of the edit.
7. Any user uploading an ACH file shall check the amounts and recipients against a register displaying ACH payments.
8. If supported by the financial institution, the Board of Education shall avail itself of the ability to recall ACH payments via NACHA file.

First Reading: November 10, 2020

Second Reading and Adopted: December 8, 2020

