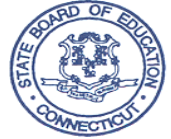




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program and Special Milk Program

FROM: Cheryl Resha, Education Manager
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: June 6, 2012

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #28-12

- I. Overview of Available Free and Reduced Price Application Materials
- II. Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEG) for July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013
- III. Information for the Implementation of Free/Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk Benefits for School Year 2012-13
- IV. Application for the After School Snack Program

I. Overview of Available Free and Reduced Price Application Materials

This memorandum addresses materials that are needed to implement free and reduced price meals, after school snack and milk benefits. These updated forms may be found on the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Child Nutrition Web site](#) and will be available after June 13, 2012. Most of these materials will be available in both the PDF *and* Word formats. Please read this information carefully and share with appropriate personnel. In addition, school districts are encouraged to use foreign language free and reduced price materials when necessary. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides samples of [foreign language materials](#).

As a reminder:

- a. School districts are required to use family/household applications and **may not request that households complete separate family applications for each school.**
- b. Districts must use the revised USDA [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#) dated October 2011 when processing applications and conducting verification.
- c. **Foster children are considered categorically eligible and a separate household application is no longer required. For more information regarding this change, refer to the USDA [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#).**
- d. Households must be informed on the free and reduced price application that Women, Infants and Children participants may be eligible for free or reduced price meals.
- e. Homeless and runaway youth are categorically eligible for free meals.
- f. Privatized military housing allowance is excluded from income eligibility determinations.
- g. Eligibility determinations are valid for the entire school year unless temporarily approved or the status changes due to verification.

- h. As indicated in [OM #23-09](#) sponsors **must extend categorical eligibility to additional children in a household**. (Note that this does NOT include the new status of categorically eligibility for households that have foster children.) For direct certification with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Family Assistance and applications submitted with case numbers for these programs, ALL children in the family, as defined in 7 CFR 245.2 are categorically eligible for free meals. Refer to the USDA [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#) for more information.
- i. Residential Child Care Institutions must refer to these materials if day clients are served and claimed for free or reduced price reimbursement.
- j. Special Milk Programs must refer to these materials if free milk is claimed and served. Note: The parent letter for Special Milk Program is different from the parent letter for meals.
- k. Direct Certification must be utilized by all Local Education Agencies (LEAs). This includes the Department of Social Services (DSS) Direct Certification letter as well as if a child's name appears on the DSS Direct Certification list. Each LEA is also required to have a Direct Certification contact person who is responsible for downloading the Direct Certification list provided by the DSS. Note: If you receive the DSS letter, and observe that the same child's name is on the DSS list *and* the parent/guardian submits a free and reduced price meal application for this child, the DSS list takes precedent over the letter and the application and the child should be recorded as directly certified based on the DSS list.

II. IEG for July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

These guidelines have been updated and are found on the [Child Nutrition Program Web site](#).

III. Information for the Implementation of Free/Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk Benefits for School Year 2012-13

A. Sample Policy Statement for Free and Reduced Price Meals, After School Snack Program and Free Milk

This sample provides a framework for developing procedures to dispense lunch, breakfast, snacks and milk without regard to children's ability to pay. As a reminder, districts will not be required to submit a paper Policy Statement form. Since there is an Agreement (ED 099) on file with the CSDE and all LEAs are required to update their online agreement and site information sheets annually, an operational memorandum will be issued in lieu of the Policy Statement.

B. Sample Parent/Guardian Letter to Households – School Meals and Snacks

A parent letter must be completed with the school district's specific program information. Make enough copies to provide one copy for each household.

C. Sample Parent/Guardian Letter to Households – Special Milk Program

The Special Milk Program Sample letter is appropriate if the sponsor:

1. operates only a Special Milk Program with a free milk option; or
2. operates a Special Milk Program with a free milk option in split-session kindergarten.

D. Sample Application and Instructions for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk Family/Household Application

Many households have different sources of income at different frequencies, such as weekly or bi-weekly wages and monthly social security benefits. Past practice has been to convert all income to a monthly amount; the USDA established a conversion factor of 4.33 for weekly income and 2.15 for bi-weekly income. However, use of these conversion factors has resulted in some perceived inconsistencies in the relationship between converted amounts and the weekly, bi-weekly, bi-monthly and monthly income limits shown in the published Income Eligibility Guidelines.

These Guidelines are established by dividing annual income limits by the annual income frequency and rounding up to the next whole dollar. While these conversion factors have created some inconsistent results, no eligible household has been denied eligibility. To avoid these problems, the following procedures are recommended:

- If a household has only one income source, or if all sources are the same frequency, do not use conversion factors. Compare the income or the sum of the incomes to the published IEG for the appropriate frequency and household size to make the eligibility determination.
- If a household reports income sources at more than one frequency, the preferred method is to annualize all income by multiplying weekly income by 52, income received every two weeks by 26, income received twice a month by 24 and income received monthly by 12.
Do not round the values resulting from each conversion. Sum all the unrounded converted values and compare the unrounded total to the published IEG for annual income for the appropriate household size.

E. Addenda

Included with these application samples on the Web site are three additional pages referred to as an *Addendum A*, *Addendum B* and *Addendum C*. The reason for the Addenda is that schools increasingly use income eligibility data to offer other benefits to students. ***DO NOT distribute these addenda to parents without reason. Review the purposes of each addendum and use if appropriate.*** Note: Child Nutrition regulations require that school districts must have parents/guardians' written permission in order to release certain information. If a school district wishes to offer additional benefits to students, attach the Addenda to the free and reduced price meal application. Please see Samples Addendum A, Addendum B and Addendum C to determine if these will be included in the determination process. Also, exclude the "Optional wording for sponsors" on the *Parent/guardian letter to the households* if Addenda A or B are not used.

- **Addendum A** – *Addendum to Application for Free or Reduced Price Meals or Free Milk Benefits.* Use this Addendum only if the school district offers additional benefits to students based on the students' income eligibility. Note that the parent/guardian has to specifically authorize (sign) to allow information to be released for each benefit. This form requires the district to each benefit being offered and to **specify the entity** that is offering the

benefit. **DO NOT send this Addendum out blank.** Please contact the Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) office with questions.

- **Addendum B – HUSKY Insurance Plan.** In cooperation with the DSS and the school nurse, each district is strongly encouraged to include Addendum B in the distribution mailing to parents. Please note that form has been updated and parents are asked to return the form to their child's teacher, school nurse or school office.
- **Addendum C – Information on SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program)** helps the DSS outreach to the parents/guardians in the district. Some children and their families may be eligible for SNAP benefits if they are also eligible for free meals. Therefore, in an effort to conduct outreach to these potential SNAP recipients, districts should consider including Addendum C with the distribution of free and reduced price materials.

F. Sample Parent/Guardian Notification Letter

School Food Authorities (SFAs) are required to notify parents/guardians of children's eligibility for benefits as soon as possible upon determination. Please copy this sample onto **sponsor letterhead** and use for notification purposes.

G. Sample Public Release

SFAs are **required** to publicly notify their communities that benefits are being offered. SFAs are not required to pay for this notification. However, SFAs are required to develop a press release and to document the date when the information was released to the media. Additionally, SFAs must make every effort to notify the community of these benefits by utilizing other means (i.e., sending a notice to a large corporation anticipating layoffs or posting information on a community bulletin board).

H. Written Collection Procedures

SFAs must have written procedures for each site that describe how the children receive their meals, snacks and milk in a way that protects their privacy concerning household economic status while maintaining accuracy. Meals, snacks and milk must be counted accurately **at the point that they are served**. Sponsors may use tickets, tokens, rosters, pin numbers or other processes to identify children's eligibility for benefits. Overt identification of a child's eligibility status must be prevented at all times. **If procedures change, the amended [collection procedure](#) must be forwarded to the CNP for approval.** The Web site contains a sample collection procedure description form. Sponsors are to develop a narrative of the actual processes in place in their schools and retain these on file.

IV. Application for the After School Snack Program

The application for the [After School Snack Program](#) will be available after **July 1, 2012**. *Please note that all applications must be submitted to the CNP for approval **two weeks prior to the start of the After School Snack Program**.* Questions regarding the After School Snack Program may be directed to Jackie Schipke at 860-807-2123.

Questions pertaining to this memorandum may be directed to the following:

<i>COUNTIES</i>	<i>CONSULTANT</i>	<i>E-MAIL</i>	<i>PHONE</i>
Hartford and Windham	Teri Dandeneau	teri.dandeneau@ct.gov	860-807-2079
Litchfield, Middlesex and Tolland	Fionnuala Brown	fionnuala.brown@ct.gov	860-807-2129
Fairfield and New London	Jackie Schipke	jackie.schipke@ct.gov	860-807-2123
New Haven (Towns/Cities beginning with A – M)	Jackie Schipke	jackie.schipke@ct.gov	860-807-2079
New Haven (Towns/Cities beginning with N – W)	Teri Dandeneau	teri.dandeneau@ct.gov	860-807-2123

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