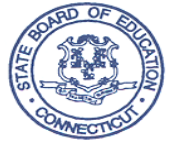
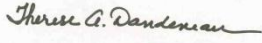




STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Sponsors of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs

**FROM:** Therese A. Dandeneau, Education Consultant 

**DATE:** September 4, 2012

**SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #40-12**

1. Updated *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*
2. Existing Inventory of USDA Foods and Commercial Products

**1. Updated *Eligibility Manual for School Meals***

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has issued the August 2012 version of the *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*, which is attached. This version replaces the manual dated October 2011 and incorporates clarifications requested by State agencies and FNS Regional offices, as well as applicable guidance issued since the last revision. Major changes are highlighted throughout the manual.

It is important to note that the FNS emphasized two areas in this manual. These are: 1) complying with requirements related to families with limited English proficiency (LEP); and 2) preventing overt identification. As a reminder, local educational agencies (LEAs) have a responsibility to assist LEP families as needed and to assure that children eligible for free or reduced price meals are not overtly identified. Also, LEAs are reminded that temporary approvals are no longer applicable because of year long duration of eligibility.

Please note that additional definitions were added by the FNS to Part 1, B, "Terms Used in this Manual." For example, definitions of "Homeless," "Migrant" and "Runaway" were added. These definitions are the same as the ones already found in Part 5, "Categorical Eligibility," but they are highlighted for easier reference. In Part 5, "Categorical Eligibility," the FNS added a general explanation regarding acceptable documentation of status and ways to exchange information to facilitate direct certification of other source categorically eligible children.

Please make sure to discard any older versions of the *Eligibility Manual for School Meals* and share the August 2012 manual with appropriate staff members.

**2. Existing Inventory of USDA Foods and Commercial Products**

This is in response to questions recently received by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding food products from both the USDA foods and commercial vendors. Some foods that may be on inventory, pose challenges in fitting into the new National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meal pattern due to their portion sizes.

Providing healthful meals while maintaining the meat/meat alternate, grain and calorie maximums is an important tool to improve the diets of America's school children and help reduce obesity. Large serving sizes may contribute to excess calories, which potentially jeopardizes schools' ability to meet other nutrient specifications as required by the new NSLP lunch pattern effective July 1, 2012.

The meal pattern does not exclude specific food items. However, schools may have products currently in inventory or on order, with large portion sizes that may not easily fit into the weekly meat/meat alternate, grain or calorie limits. Since preparing and offering these products while remaining within the new meal pattern requirements may be difficult, the USDA offers a few reminders and suggestions.

The USDA recognizes that both School Food Authorities (SFAs) and their food suppliers are working in good faith to ensure that products supporting the new meal patterns are available. The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to make use of all food, which has been purchased for school meal programs. SFAs must honor their procurement contracts and utilize inventories for items that companies have produced. Therefore, SFAs should plan to menu these existing inventories as quickly as possible and begin planning for new procurements that were not re-bid for School Year (SY) 2012-13.

Recognizing that product development, production and procurement timelines pose challenges for SFAs and their suppliers, the USDA encourages SFAs to work with the State Agency (including the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services' Food Distribution office) to help utilize existing inventories and strengthen procurement practices in support of the new meal patterns, particularly early in the school year.

It is also important to note that in the upcoming year, in accordance with regulations, a quantity violation is not a disallowance on a first review. While SFAs will not be eligible to receive the 6 cent reimbursement, the State Agency will not assess fiscal action for menus that fall outside of the weekly required ranges because of the need to use up existing inventory. SFAs should apply for 6 cents certification as soon as they are able to provide compliant menus that meet all meal pattern requirements.

Below are three distinct scenarios and potential remedies to utilize commercial products in SY 2012-13 that the USDA has issued and the scenarios involve: 1) using existing inventory in schools; 2) modifying/cancelling orders submitted but not processed; and 3) managing future orders not yet processed. In addition to the strategies identified below for the school meals programs, SFAs are encouraged to consider other potential uses of the food (in other child nutrition programs or vended meals not subject to the meal pattern).

a. Physical inventory of product

There are several options for SFAs for utilizing existing inventory, either in storage or at schools, particularly large-portioned food items that do not easily fit with the weekly maximum requirements. SFAs may plan to offer larger items less frequently on the menu, such as no more than once per week since the grain and m/ma limits are on a weekly basis. The larger portion products would be balanced with smaller sized offerings over the course of the week to meet the weekly dietary specifications. SFAs may also find that certain items, such as larger hamburger patties, may need to be transferred to high schools where the weekly meat/meat alternate limits are higher. SFAs should also work with other school districts or the Food Distribution office to request transfers of food where some may have excess inventories that can be utilized by others. SFAs can also use these products for staff meals. Finally, the products may be adjusted in form and used as ingredients in other menu items (i.e., stewing bone-in chicken for soup for smaller individual m/ma servings).

- b. Inventory at processor/orders submitted but not yet processed  
 For products that have been ordered and are at the processing facility, but not yet processed or delivered to the schools, SFAs should explore with manufacturers if they can change existing product specifications for their end products. SFAs are encouraged to work closely with the Food Distribution office and industry to expedite the approval and availability of products that assist schools with preparing meals that meet the new requirements. Such products may be further processed or prepared in a way that reduces portion size (e.g. resizing of hamburger patties). SFAs will need to work closely with the Food Distribution office and food processors to determine what flexibility exists within existing specifications and the procurement and/or contract parameters.
  
- c. Orders to be placed in the near future but not yet purchased  
 Where appropriate, the Food Distribution office may adjust or cancel USDA Food orders for products that have not been purchased and may request orders for other USDA Foods to spend their entitlement value and allow SFAs to effectively utilize their planned assistance levels. SFAs will need to work with the Food Distribution office to modify existing orders or place orders for other foods. The USDA is currently in the process of reviewing existing USDA Foods specifications and will be working to revise them as needed.

For commercial products scheduled to be ordered in the coming months, SFAs should change existing product specifications as soon as possible. This also applies to future procurements through the remainder of SY 2012-13. SFAs that could not complete procurements prior to SY 2012-13 and amended current contracts are required to ensure that new procurements are in place for SY 2013-14. SFAs should assess the cost of not effectively using existing inventories that pose challenges with the meal requirements.

Questions pertaining to this memorandum may be directed to:

CSDE School Nutrition Programs Staff	
County	Consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Litchfield County</li> <li>• New London County</li> </ul>	Fionnuala Brown <a href="mailto:fionnuala.brown@ct.gov">fionnuala.brown@ct.gov</a> 860-807-2129
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairfield County</li> <li>• Middlesex County (towns/cities beginning with C-E)</li> <li>• New Haven County (towns/cities beginning with A-M)</li> </ul>	Jackie Schipke <a href="mailto:jackie.schipke@ct.gov">jackie.schipke@ct.gov</a> 860-807-2123
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Middlesex County (towns/cities beginning with F-W)</li> <li>• Tolland County</li> <li>• Windham County</li> </ul>	Susan Alston <a href="mailto:susan.alston@ct.gov">susan.alston@ct.gov</a> 860-807-2081
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hartford County</li> <li>• New Haven County (towns/cities beginning with N-W)</li> </ul>	Teri Dandeneau <a href="mailto:teri.dandeneau@ct.gov">teri.dandeneau@ct.gov</a> 860-807-2079

Attachment