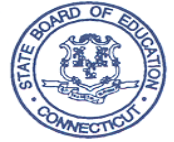




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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

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

DATE: February 17, 2012

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #10-12
Verification for Cause in the School Meals Programs

Recently, concerns have been raised about school district employees allegedly misrepresenting their incomes on applications to receive free or reduced price school meals for their children. As a result, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provide the clarification below on whether or not a local education agency (LEA) may use the salary information of their own employees, maintained for business purposes, as a tool to implement verification for cause and help ensure the integrity of free and reduced price certifications.

Section 9(b)(3) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA), 42 USC 1758(b)(3), and regulations on eligibility for free and reduced price meals in participating schools, at 7 CFR 245.6a, establish requirements for LEAs in conducting verification of the information provided on approved applications. In general, LEAs must annually verify a sample of approved applications, which is typically three percent of applications approved on the basis of income. The required verification sample size may not be increased or decreased by an LEA.

Apart from the required verification of a specified sample of approved applications, regulations at 7 CFR 245.6a(c)(7) require that an LEA “must verify any questionable application and should, on a case-by-case basis, verify any application for cause ...when the [school] is aware of additional income or persons in the household.” In addition, regulations, at 7 CFR 245.6a(c)(1)(ii), require that an LEA must first complete the certification process – reviewing an application for free or reduced price meals and notifying a household of the child’s free or reduced price status – prior to conducting verification.

LEAs can use verification for cause to review approved applications for free or reduced price meals when known or available information indicates school district employees may have misrepresented their incomes on their applications to receive free or reduced price meals for their children. The USDA recommends that an LEA consult with legal counsel in establishing the parameters of verification for cause for school district employees.

Verification for cause must not be used to automatically verify the households of all school district employees whose children are certified for free or reduced price meals. However, from among the list of children approved for free or reduced price meals, an LEA could identify children of school district employees and use LEA salary information available to them to identify questionable applications and then conduct verifications for cause on those questionable applications.

Please note that any verification for cause conducted by an LEA is separate from the verification sample required by the NSLA and program regulations, and may be conducted at any time during the school year. LEAs must also follow the confidentiality, notice and appeal procedures required in 7 CFR 245.6a when conducting any type of verification. Under the regulatory procedures, any modifications to a student's eligibility status cannot occur until the verification process, including any appeal, is complete. More information about the verification process is available in Part 8D of the [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#) (October 2011).

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) supports use of verification for cause where appropriate as a method for LEAs to address integrity concerns. The USDA strongly encourages LEAs and their legal counsel to consult with their State agency prior to undertaking verification for cause where concerns with employee misrepresentation of information on an income eligibility application have been raised. State agencies should be able to assist in ensuring that LEAs balance administrative requirements and integrity with access to free and reduced price meals for eligible children. Finally, as a reminder, any situation of suspected fraud should be reported to the Department of Agriculture's Office of the Inspector General at 800-424-9121.

Questions may be directed to:

<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	860-807-2123
New Haven (Towns/Cities beginning with N – W)	Teri Dandeneau	teri.dandeneau@ct.gov	860-807-2079

CR:tdd

Important: This is a numbered Operational Memorandum that contains important program information. Please read carefully and retain for future reference. Operational Memoranda are also posted on the Child Nutrition Web site at:

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=321576>