



Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

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DATE: July 29, 2016

MEMO CODE: SP 50-2016; CACFP 19-2016; SFSP 17-2016

SUBJECT: 2016 Edition of the Eligibility Manual for School Meals

TO: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

Attached is the school year (SY) 2016-2017 version of the *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*. The manual provides comprehensive information on Federal requirements, policies, and procedures, and is intended to help State agencies and local educational agencies (LEAs) accurately determine, certify, and verify children's eligibility for free and reduced price school meals and free milk.

This revised version incorporates clarifications requested by State agencies and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Offices, as well as applicable guidance issued since the last revision in July 2015. Notable changes are highlighted throughout the manual. Formatting changes, which are significant in this version, are not highlighted, as they do not represent a change in policy. Consistent with previous years, the highlighted version will be removed after three months and the un-highlighted version will remain available for use.

The most significant changes are included in *Section 3: Establishing Eligibility* and *Section 4: The School Meal Application*. Section 3 incorporates regulatory changes codified in the final rule, *National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Eliminating Applications through Community Eligibility as Required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, published in the Federal Register on July 29, 2016, 81 FR 50194. The revision includes changes to the requirements regarding carryover and transfer of eligibility for children transitioning from schools participating in a special Provision, including the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

Section 4 provides an overview of requirements for the Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals effective for SY 2016-2017. It also highlights requirements that will be required in SY 2017-2018 and optional design modifications intended to simplify the application for households and improve application processing by local officials. This section also expands the overview of longstanding State agency

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and LEA responsibilities for ensuring meaningful access for individuals with limited English proficiency throughout the application process.

Other changes to the 2016 edition include:

- Clarification of how the notice of denial and notice of adverse action apply when a household's benefits expire after the carryover period ends;
- An updated USDA Nondiscrimination Statement, which was new as of November 2015; and
- A revised definition of "Determining Official" and new definitions for the terms "Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations," "Food Service Management Company," and "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program."

State agencies are reminded to distribute this information to Program operators immediately. Program operators should direct any questions regarding this memorandum to the appropriate State agency. State agency contact information is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>. State agencies should direct questions to the appropriate FNS Regional Office.



for

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Child Nutrition Programs