



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Division of Food & Nutrition
PO Box 334
TRENTON NJ 08625-0334

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor
KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

DOUGLAS H. FISHER
Secretary

To: School Business Administrators
Charter School Leads
Non-Public School Administrators
Food Service Directors

From: Arleen Ramos-Szatmary, Coordinator
School Nutrition Programs

Date: June 28, 2017

Subject: Updates to the Application Packet for Participation in the School Nutrition Programs for
School Year 2017-2018

As School Year 2016-2017 comes to a close, the Fiscal Year 2018 Letter to Parent and Application Packet will be accessible in SNEARS **beginning July 1, 2017**. Important dates and enhancements to the Letter to Parent and Application Packet are described below.

Letter to Parent/Application Packet:

- The 2018 Letter to Parent can be located under the Menu Tab “Program Management”. Once the Letter to Parent is approved, SFAs will have access to print the *2017-2018 Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, Frequently Asked Questions* (formerly, *Letter to Parent*) and the *How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals* instructions. These documents must be made available to all households.
- The Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals for 2017-2018 has some slight modifications:
 - SFAs must now insert their school/district mailing address in the “Step 4” header.
 - The bottom of page 2 now provides work space for the determining official to document such information as Total Income, Categorical Eligibility, Eligibility determined, and appropriate signatures.
- A fill-to-print household application will be available on SNEARS upon approval of the Letter to Parent.
- Spanish application materials are also available. Additional non-English language application materials are expected to be released by USDA shortly on the following website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/applying-free-and-reduced-price-school-meals>.

Approval of the Letter to Parent will provide access to the required documents to complete the remainder of the Fiscal Year 2018 Application Packet. Application documents must be submitted and certified by **September 30, 2017**. Application packets not certified by this date will place reimbursement in jeopardy.

Electronic Applications: SFAs that use an online application, a scanned application format or an electronic application system that approves the Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals **must get approval from this office to use the form.**

Required elements of the application are:

- The *Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, Frequently Asked Questions* (formerly, *Letter to Parent*) and the *How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals* instructions **must** include the same sections and language as the state format.
- **A hard copy must be available to parents that do not or cannot complete the application electronically.**
- The current USDA nondiscrimination statement must be included in the instructions.

Email the request, along with a copy of the *2017-2018 Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, Frequently Asked Questions* and the *How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals* instructions to Jackie Bricker at Jacqueline.Bricker@ag.state.nj.us .

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP): The start of the CEP election season began on May 15th and will close on June 30th. Any SFA determined by the State Agency to be CEP eligible must indicate in SNEARS (under the Community Eligibility Application Link) if they are interested in applying or certify that they will not apply for the upcoming school year. SFAs that intend to apply must complete the application process in SNEARS, using data as of April 1, by the deadline of June 30, 2017. Once approved for CEP, SFAs are still obligated to complete the rest of the application packet, starting with the Letter to Parent.

Please refer to the CEP annual notification list of eligible SFAs and schools available on the NJDA website at <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/cepnotification.html> to determine if your district/sites are eligible for CEP. The list is also available in SNEARS under the Resources Tab by clicking on the CEP Category Heading.

In addition, there are two webinars posted under “Resources” in SNEARS detailing the CEP application process for new CEP districts and for “veteran” CEP districts. It is highly recommended that interested sponsors view these webinars for further instructions on applying for CEP. A webinar focusing on meal counting and claiming in CEP districts will be also be offered in September.

Direct Certification: The link to perform DC for the 2017-2018 School Year will be available beginning July 15, 2017. Direct Certification must be completed a minimum of four times during the school year according to the following time schedule:

1. July 15th – August 30, 2017
2. September 1st – September 30, 2017
3. October 1st – October 30, 2017
4. March 1st – March 30, 2018

SFAs are strongly encouraged to do the matching process **monthly**. This will increase the total number of DC students, therefore reducing the total number of applications to determine and verify.

Questions may be directed to the School Nutrition Programs Office at 609-984-0692.