



State of New Jersey


DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Division of Food & Nutrition
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To: School Business Administrators, Charter School Leads; Non Public School Administrators; Food Service Directors

From: Arleen Ramos-Szatmary, Coordinator 
School Nutrition Programs

Date: September 6, 2017

Subject: "Back to School" Information and Reminders

The 2017-2018 School Year is beginning, and the School Nutrition Programs Unit is continuing to embrace and implement the changes resulting from the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. Please take a few moments to read the important reminders and updates noted below.

2018 Application Packet Deadlines & Administrative Review Notifications: Letter to Parent and Application documents must be submitted and certified by September 30, 2017 in order to participate in the School Nutrition Programs for School Year 2017-2018. Reimbursement for SFAs who have not certified their Letter to Parent and Application Packets by this deadline will be placed on hold.

SFAs receiving an Administrative Review this year were notified this past June. Procurement Reviews will also be conducted for those SFAs receiving an Administrative Review; however, all SFAs are expected to comply with basic procurement guidelines. A webinar and guidance has been posted on SNEARS to assist SFAs in assuring free and open competition when entering into contractual agreements.

Electronic Contract Application System (ECAS): New this year, the School Nutrition Programs Unit will be launching the Electronic Contract Application System in January of 2018. School districts with Commercial Vendor contracts, Consolidation Agreement contracts, and SFA to SFA contracts will receive training to be able to utilize the system in the spring of 2018. SFAs contracting with a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) will be able to pilot the new system in the spring of 2018. Please contact Marya Hewins at Marya.hewins@ag.state.nj.us to join the pilot program for FSMC contracts.

Local Charge Policies: Effective July 1, 2017, all SFAs must develop and implement a meal charge policy for each school operating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. The policy must be communicated to school administrators, school food service professionals, families and students, and must include how delinquent meal charge debt will be collected. This policy must be provided in writing to all households at the start of the year, and to households that transfer to the SFA during the year.

Please note that New Jersey SFAs have always been required to establish and post a clear, written charge policy. The passing of the NJ State A-1796/S-2000 law on February 5, 2015 further emphasized the importance of providing written notification to parents of students who have accumulated foodservice debt. SFAs should refer to the April 15, 2015 memo titled, "Guidance for Parent Notification of Payment Owed for School Breakfast and School Lunch Meals" located in SNEARS under "Resources/NJ Memos School Year 2014-2015" when developing and communicating the meal charge policy to school personnel and households.

Flexibility regarding Date of Submission for Applications for Free and Reduced Price School Meals: Upon approval from the State Agency, SFAs are able to allow a household that submits a complete application to receive the free or reduced price benefit the day of submission rather than the date determined. SFAs who apply for this flexibility must have a policy for established time frames that the Determining Official is expected to meet when determining the application. SFAs interested in applying for this flexibility must contact Jackie Bricker at Jacqueline.bricker@ag.state.nj.us.

Lowfat, Flavored Milk Exemption: SFAs interested in allowing the service of lowfat (1%) flavored milk during School Year 2017-2018 can apply for an exemption by completing Form #364, which can be found under Resources/Equipment Requests and Waivers in SNEARS. Please note the form must be submitted to snspecialprojects@ag.state.nj.us by September 8, 2017.

Local Wellness Policy: Effective June 30, 2017, all SFAs must comply with the requirements of the “Local Wellness Policy” Final Rule released in June of 2016. At a minimum, the Local Wellness Policy must contain:

- Specific goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness. SFAs are required to review and consider evidence-based strategies in determining these goals
- Standards and nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages sold to students on the school campus during the school day that are consistent with Federal regulations for School meal nutrition standards, and the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards
- Standards for all foods and beverages provided, but not sold, to students during the school day (e.g., in classroom parties, classroom snacks brought by parents, or other foods given as incentives)
- Policies for food and beverage marketing that allow marketing and advertising of only those foods and beverages that meet the Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards
- Description of public involvement, public updates, policy leadership, and evaluation plan

The “Local Wellness Policy Updates for School Year 2017-2018” webinar can be found under the “Training” tab in SNEARS. SFAs are encouraged to use the updated “Wellness Policy Assessment Tool” to track each school/site’s progress in creating a healthy school environment. This tool can be found in SNEARS under the “Local Wellness Policy” tab in “Resources”.

Updated Meal Pattern for Children Ages 1-4: Schools serving meals to infants and children ages 1-4 must comply with the updated Child and Adult Care Food Program meal pattern requirements no later than October 1, 2017. In light of the operational challenges of following multiple meal patterns within the same service area, the USDA memo SP37-2017 titled, “Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers”, states that *schools that serve meals to preschoolers and K-5 students in the same service area at the same time may choose to follow the grade-appropriate meal patterns for each grade group, or serve the K-5 meal pattern under parts 7 CFR 210.10 and 220.8 to both grade groups.*

Please note that the State Agency has applied for a waiver to allow *all* schools with preschool programs, regardless of service area, to choose which meal pattern (NSLP or CACFP) is more fitting for their students. Further information will be provided to all SFA once this guidance has been received.

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP): The CEP Final Rule released on July 29, 2016 established the following policy regarding carryover for CEP students transferring to non-CEP schools:

- A non-CEP school receiving a student from a CEP school in September must offer the student a free, reimbursable meal for up to 30 operating days or until a new eligibility determination is made in the current school year, whichever comes first
- A non-CEP school receiving a student transferring from a CEP school mid-year must provide free meals to the CEP student for up to 10 operating days or until a new eligibility determination is made

SFAs can refer to the listing of schools participating in CEP located in SNEARS and on the NJDA website when working with students transferring from CEP schools.

Civil Rights Data Collection Report: All SFAs must complete the Civil Rights Data Collection Report (Form #86) for each school/site under its sponsorship. The form must reflect data as of October 15th of each year and must be maintained on file. The form can be accessed on the NJDA website at

<http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/applic/forms/#5> and in SNEARS under “Resources/Annual Application and Agreement Documents”.

Food Safety Inspection Report: SFAs must report the number of health/sanitation inspections each school/site had during the 2016-2017 school year in SNEARS by October 30th.

Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week – September 25th – 29th: Jersey Fresh Farm to School Week was designated as the last week of each September by a law signed in 2010 by Governor Christie. During this celebration, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) showcases schools that connect with New Jersey farmers to purchase local produce for school meals and to increase student consumption of healthy produce through school garden, agriculture and nutrition education. More information can be found on the Farm to School Website at www.farmtoschool.nj.gov.

Calendar of Important School Nutrition Program Events: A calendar outlining important School Nutrition dates and events has been posted in SNEARS to assist SFAs in complying with all School Nutrition Program deadlines.

We look forward to working with you and your staff, and helping you to provide healthy, safe and low-priced meals for your students for the 2017-2018 School Year. Please direct any questions to the School Nutrition Programs Unit at 609-984-0692.