



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) and Special Milk Program (SMP)

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

DATE: March 25, 2009

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #9-09
Ways to Assist Families during Economic Downturn

This memorandum is to clarify the effect of year-long duration of eligibility on changes in income that may occur during the school year and to discuss how local educational agencies (LEAs) may assist families who may be experiencing financial hardships. Below is information highlighting important application certification areas that may be impacted by the current economic downturn.

1. Reporting Changes during the School Year

While households are not required to report changes in circumstances during the school year, a household may contact LEAs to report any changes; a new application is not required. When a change increases the level of benefits (reduced price to free or adding additional members to the household), we encourage LEAs to put the change into effect within three operating days.

2. Applying during the School Year

Households may apply at any time during the school year, even if an earlier application was denied. The requirement for year-long duration does not preclude applying or reapplying during the school year. However, households reapplying because they did not complete the verification process are subject to requirements outlined in Part 8, N. (Households that Reapply for Program Benefits) of *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*. A copy of this manual may be downloaded at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Nutrition/EligibilityManual.pdf>.

3. More Frequent Direct Certification

Because families may become eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as the Food Stamps Program) or the Temporary Family Assistance Program at different times, we encourage LEAs to conduct additional direct certification activities to identify newly eligible children. The LEA should also work with the school district's homeless liaison to promptly identify eligible children.

4. **Transfer students**

Because families may be moving to new school districts, LEAs are reminded that they can share/accept a child's existing eligibility determination with another LEA. Refer to part 3, O. (Transferring Eligibility between LEAs) of the *Eligibility Manual for School Meals* for additional information.

5. **Outreach**

LEAs are encouraged to inform families about the availability of free and reduced price meal benefits for eligible children and to utilize the procedures described in this memo. Additionally, LEAs are reminded about their ability to complete an application for a child known to be eligible if the household fails to apply. The requirements for this process are found in Part 3, J. (Households That Fail to Apply) of the *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*.

Questions about the information provided in this memorandum may be directed to:

- Fionnuala Brown, 860-807-2048, fionnuala.brown@ct.gov
- Teri Dandeneau, 860-807-2079, teri.dandeneau@ct.gov
- Jackie Schipke, 860-807-2123, jackie.schipke@ct.gov
- Robert Zwack, 860-807-2081, robert.zwack@ct.gov

CR:tdd