



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: 2008 Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Sponsors

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

DATE: July 17, 2008

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #06-08 – SFSP

1. Automatic Eligibility for Free Meal Benefits Extended to All Children Enrolled in Head Start
2. Upward Bound Program Eligibility
3. Closed Enrolled Site Eligibility

1. Automatic Eligibility for Free Meal Benefits Extended to All Children Enrolled in Head Start

This memorandum provides guidance regarding amendments to the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) that extend automatic eligibility for free meal benefits, including free milk, to all children enrolled in Head Start and participating in child nutrition programs.

On December 12, 2007, the President signed *The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007* (Public Law 110-134) which contains several significant revisions to the Head Start program, including amendments to the eligibility criteria in section 645 of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9840). Public Law 110-134 also amends sections 9(b)(12)(A)(iii) and 17(c)(5) of the NSLA to correspond with the new eligibility criteria.

Head Start serves primarily children from families with household incomes at or below the Federal poverty level. However, a small proportion of children in families with household incomes above the poverty level may be served. In the past, only those children who were income eligible for Head Start were considered automatically eligible for free meals in the child nutrition programs.

Public Law 110-134 makes *any* child enrolled in Head Start automatically eligible for free meals without further application or eligibility determination. Therefore, even a child who is not from a household with an income at or below the poverty level is automatically eligible for free meals if they are enrolled in Head Start.

Institutions and school food authorities (SFA) may now establish eligibility of all Head Start enrollees through documentation provided by the Head Start program. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will be updating the relevant eligibility guidance to reflect this change. All reimbursable meals served to children enrolled in Head Start may be claimed at the free rate.

2. Upward Bound Program Eligibility

SFSP sponsors operating Upward Bound sites may continue to use documentation of income-eligible Upward Bound participants, provided and certified by an Upward Bound grantee, to document the eligibility of the SFSP closed enrolled sites, residential or non-residential camps. An Upward Bound income application may be used in lieu of the SFSP application to determine income eligibility for all SFSP participants since both programs have an income eligibility threshold of 185% of the national poverty guidelines. Upward Bound rules require that two-thirds of the participants in a particular program are both low-income and potential first-generation college students; the remaining one-third must be either low-income or potential first-generation college students. For example, an income eligible Upward Bound participant is considered income eligible in the SFSP while an Upward Bound participant who is not income eligible for that program would not be considered eligible in SFSP. Sponsors should contact our office if additional clarification is required on the use of Upward Bound eligibility forms.

3. Closed Enrolled Site Eligibility: Eligibility Waiver

SFSP sponsors with closed enrolled sites are still permitted to establish eligibility based on area eligibility data for the location of the site, rather than on documentation that at least 50% of the enrolled children at the site are eligible for free or reduced price meals. This eligibility waiver was initially established in 2003.

As a result, any site located in an attendance area of a school in which at least 50 percent of the children are from households eligible for free or reduced price meals will be eligible for SFSP reimbursement for all meals served to eligible children, regardless of whether the site serves an identified group of children or is open to the community. Closed enrolled Upward Bound sites may also utilize this waiver option with State agency approval. Documentation to substantiate eligibility must be documented on the summer food site sheets as part of the application process.

Questions regarding this memorandum may be directed to Susan Bohuslaw at (860)807-2073 or Robert Zwack at (860)807-2081.

CR:sbb