




State of New Jersey

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To: School Business Administrators, Charter School Leads; Non Public School Administrators;
Food Service Directors of Schools Participating in the School Nutrition Programs

From: Arleen Ramos-Szatmary, Coordinator 
School Nutrition Programs

Date: November 9, 2020

Subject: Autumn Updates for School Year 2020-2021

The 2020-2021 School Year is in full swing, and the School Nutrition Programs Unit would like to highlight newly released changes and requirements for the new School Year. Please take a few moments to read the important reminders and updates noted below.

Extension of Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Waivers: USDA recently released twelve nationwide waivers allowing schools to continue operating the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) through June 30, 2021 in order to provide free meals to all children aged 18 and under, while minimizing the continued challenges of meal service during COVID-19.

School Food Authorities (SFAs) who elect to provide free meals through the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) through the end of the academic school year must submit and certify the FY 2021 SSO Application Packet to reflect the operating months of October 2020 through June 30, 2021 by the deadline of December 31st.

SFAs who did not previously operate the Seamless Summer Option in September and October still have the opportunity to participate and provide free meals to all students for the months of November through June. The entire FY 2021 SSO Application Packet must be completed and Certified by the deadline of December 31, 2020. SSO Application Packet instructions can be accessed by clicking on the following link: https://www-agr.state.nj.us/agriculture/AG_SNEARS2/resources/SSOInstructions.pdf.

Verification Update: The recently released *Questions and Answers Relating to the Nationwide Waiver to Allow Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option Operations during SY2020-2021 – Q&As #3* requires that any School Food Authority who collected school meal applications during the 2020-2021 school year conduct verification. This includes SFAs participating in the Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option programs. In addition, the deadline to conduct and report verification results has been extended to February 2021.

The School Nutrition Programs Unit will be providing instructions, updated deadlines, and verification training dates in the coming weeks. The Verification Link will remain under construction in SNEARS until this guidance is developed.

As a reminder, SFAs must continue to process school meal applications and conduct direct certification.

Return to 2012 Standards Regarding Whole Grains, Non-fat Flavored Milk and Target 2 Sodium Levels: As a result of the April 13, 2020 decision in the *Center for Science in the Public Interest et al., v. Sonny Perdue, Secretary et al*, school meal patterns returned to the requirements of the 2012 final rule, *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs*, 77 Fed. Reg. 4088 (Jan. 26, 2012). For SY2020-2021 in the NSLP, SBP and CACFP, flavored milk may only be non-fat; all grains served in the NSLP and SBP must be whole-grain

rich; and school lunches and breakfasts offered through the NSLP and SBP must meet Target 2 sodium levels as defined in 7 CRF 210.10(c) and 220.8(c).

The Target 2 Sodium Levels are as follows:

Grade Grouping	Reimbursable School Lunches	Reimbursable School Breakfasts
K-5	≤ 935 mg	≤ 485 mg
6-8	≤ 1,035 mg	≤ 535 mg
9-12	≤ 1,080 mg	≤ 570 mg

SFAs unable to meet the 2012 nutrition standards for the 2020-2021 School Year may apply for the meal pattern flexibility waiver using Form #378, located in SNEARS Resources, under the category heading, “School Meal Flexibilities”.

Administrative & Procurement Reviews: SFAs currently operating in meal programs will be monitored and reviewed. More information will be provided in the winter months. Procurement Reviews will continue as previously planned. All reviews will be conducted off-site.

Food Safety Inspection (FSI) Report Reminder: SFAs must report the number of health/sanitation inspections each school/site received during the prior 2019-2020 school year in SNEARS. The deadline was October 30th. A reminder has been sent to SFAs who have not submitted this required report. The link is still available pending late submissions.

Civil Rights: Civil Rights training must be provided on an annual basis to all frontline staff and those employees who supervise frontline staff. “Frontline staff” are defined as all employees who interact with Child Nutrition program applicants or participants. Acceptable training methods include the *Civil Rights for School Nutrition Program Professionals* webinar and the *Civil Rights Self-Study Guide* found in SNEARS.

SFAs providing meals in the classroom for 2020-2021 academic school year only are not required to display an *And Justice for All* poster in every classroom. Instead, schools can display posters in prominent locations throughout the school, such as a bulletin board in the main building entrance, the school office, or another area frequently visited by parents and children. Schools may choose to copy posters and put one in each classroom, but that is not required.

In addition, 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”.

Technology Tips & Tricks in School Nutrition Programs Video Series: The School Nutrition Programs Unit has developed a *Technology Tips and Tricks in School Nutrition Programs Series*, which aims to help incorporate technology into the operations of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Topics include, “Completing the SSO Voucher”, “Professional Development”, “Navigating the Forms Website”, and “How to Obtain State Approval of the Electronic Applications System”. Please continue to check under the Training link in SNEARS for new videos, and send any ideas for future videos to snpspecialprojects@ag.nj.gov.

Hunger-Free Students’ Bill of Rights Legislation: On May 4, 2020, Governor Murphy signed the Hunger Free Students’ Bill of Rights Act into law. The law prevents the public identification or stigmatization of any student with school meal debt. Examples of stigmatizing, or “lunch shaming”, specified in the law include requiring a student to sit at a separate table, wear a wristband, handstamp, or other marker, or by serving the student an alternate meal. In addition, it prevents school districts from discarding a school breakfast or lunch because money is owed for previously provided meals.

In addition, the law outlines the measures schools must take in communicating with the parents and guardians of students with foodservice debt prior to the denial of a meal, if applicable, and clarifies that schools are not required to deny a meal to students who have accumulated debt. The full law can be found in SNEARS by clicking on “Resources”, and then clicking on “Unpaid Meal Charges”.

In light of this law and the COVID-19 pandemic, SFAs operating the National School Lunch Program are encouraged to review their meal charge policies for SY2020-2021 to ensure that all policies are consistent with the law, especially those policies concerning alternate meals. SFAs should continue to follow their meal charge policies and encourage parents with foodservice debt to submit an Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals. SFAs who are providing meals free of cost to all students through the Seamless Summer Option or Summer Food Service Program should take note for the next academic school year.

We look forward to working with you and your foodservice departments toward a healthy and safe 2020-2021 School Year. Please direct any questions to the School Nutrition Programs Unit at 609-984-0693.