



State of New Jersey

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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: June 15, 2015

Subject: Updates to the Application Packet for Participation in the School Nutrition Programs
for School Year 2015-2016

Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals – New Format

USDA has released a newly formatted Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals that has been modified for New Jersey and will be implemented for School Year 2015-2016. The application format is significantly different from prior versions. Changes to the Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals will be thoroughly reviewed in the “Determining Officials” trainings this summer (dates to be announced in SNEARS), however, some highlights of the changes include:

- Adult and non-adult (all children) household members are divided into separate reporting sections. Enrolled students no longer have to be listed in two sections.
- A separate indication of “no income” from every household member is no longer required. An income field left blank is considered an indication that there is no income to report.
- All income reporting fields ask for whole dollars only. Annual income is no longer an option for households to report.
- Income earned from children is now streamlined into one reporting field located in the same general section as household income.
- The signature of the confirming official is no longer required on the applications selected for verification. The confirming signature will be required on the “Verification Tracker” Form (#272).
- An “error prone” box is no longer present on the application itself; however, LEAs are still required to track error-prone applications.
- A field has been added for the parent/guardian to report the total number of members in the household.
- A **fill-to-print** household application will be available on SNEARS upon approval of the Letter to Parent.

The Spanish language application materials are expected to be released shortly. Other non-English language versions are expected to be released in time for School Year 2016-2017.

Letter to Parent/Instructions – New Titles

The title, “Letter to Parent” has been changed to “Frequently Asked Questions about Free and Reduced Price School Meals”. The title, “Instructions”, has been changed to “How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals”.

Letter to Parent (LTP)/Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Approval Procedures

The 2015-2016 LTP/FAQ will be accessible in SNEARS **beginning July 1, 2015**, under the Menu Tab “Program Management”. Once the LTP/FAQ is approved, LEAs will then have access to print the 2015-2016 Application, LTP/FAQ and Instructions/How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals.

When completing the LTP/FAQ form in SNEARS, LEAs must:

- Enter the 2015 Paid Lunch Equity weighted average price. This figure can be obtained from the Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) Tool, after entering the required data. (*Refer to the PLE Webinar posted under the Trainings tab in SNEARS for further guidance*) The completed PLE Tool must be saved by the LEA as submission of the tool to the State Agency may be required.
- Answer the following questions:
 - “Does the LEA have a Free and Reduced Eligibility Determination software system where parents can fill and submit the household application electronically?”
 - If yes, “What is the name of the software system?”
 - “If the Free and Reduced Price School Meals Application is available online, enter the school district’s web site address where it can be accessed.”
 - **Note:** Having an application available on the district’s web site for parents to print and complete is not considered applying online.

Application Packet Procedures

Approval of the LTP/FAQ will provide access to the required documents to complete the remainder of the application packet. Application documents must be submitted and certified by **September 30, 2015**.

The following enhancements have been made to the 2015-2016 Application Packet:

LEA Info Screen: If applicable, LEAs will select their Student Information System’s company name and/or their Point of Sale (POS) System’s company name.

Site Details Screen: LEAs will indicate for each school/site:

- Grade levels (drop down box will no longer be used)
- Department of Education ID number
- Public or non-public status
- If Offer-vs-Serve is implemented

Manual Documents: If applicable, additional new manual documents are required.

Electronic Applications

LEAs 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. Approval is required before the LTP/FAQ is submitted in SNEARS.**

Required elements of the application are:

- The Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, LTP/FAQ and the Instructions/How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals **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 Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, LTP/FAQ and Instructions/How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals to Jackie Bricker at Jacqueline.Bricker@ag.state.nj.us .

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

The start of the CEP election period begins on May 15th and the deadline to apply is August 31st. Any LEA 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. LEAs that intend to apply must complete the application process in SNEARS using data as of April 1st. Once approved for CEP, LEAs must still complete the rest of the application packet, starting with the LTP/FAQ.

Please refer to the CEP annual notification list of eligible LEAs 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 as well as “already participating” CEP districts. It is highly recommended that interested sponsors view these webinars for further instructions on applying for CEP.

Questions may be directed to your School Nutrition Specialist at 609-984-0692.