



State of New Jersey

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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 17, 2016

Subject: Updates to the Application Packet for Participation in the School Nutrition Programs for
School Year 2016-2017

As School Year 2015-2016 comes to a close, the Fiscal Year 2017 Letter to Parent and Application Packet will be accessible in SNEARS **beginning July 1, 2016**. Important dates and enhancements to the Letter to Parent and Application Packet are described below.

Letter to Parent/Application Packet:

- The 2017 Letter to Parent can be located under the Menu Tab “Program Management”. Once the Letter to Parent is approved, SFAs will have access to print the *2016-2017 Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, Frequently Asked Questions* (formerly, *Letter to Parent*) and the *How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals* instructions. These documents must be made available to all households.
- The Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals for 2016-2017 has some slight modifications:
 - The header, “Student” in Step 1 after households enter the “School Name” has been clarified to read, “Student attends the school district”.
 - A “Sources of Income” chart has been inserted on page 2 to assist households in determining reportable sources of income for adults and children.
 - The Civil Rights Nondiscrimination statement has been updated to reflect the most recent version.
- A fill-to-print household application will be available on SNEARS upon approval of the Letter to Parent.



- Spanish application materials are also available. Additional non-English language application materials are expected to be released by USDA shortly on the following website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/applying-free-and-reduced-price-school-meals>.

Approval of the Letter to Parent will provide access to the required documents to complete the remainder of the Fiscal Year 2017 Application Packet. Application documents must be submitted and certified by **September 30, 2016**. Application packets not certified by this date will place reimbursement in jeopardy.

The following enhancements have been made to the “Administrative Roles” section of the 2016-2017 Application Packet:

- SFAs are required to enter the names and contact information for the roles of both the Certifier and Alternate Certifier in order to gain approval. The Certifier and Alternate Certifier must have the ability to sign contracts on behalf of the SFA.
- SFAs are also required to enter the name and contact information for the role of Food Service Director. All SFAs must designate a Food Service Director on staff according to the Professional Standards Final Rule. If the duties of the Food Service Director are split among several people, the person fulfilling the majority of those duties should be entered as the Food Service Director. More information and an overview of Food Service Director Accountabilities can be found under the Professional Standards tab under “Resources” in SNEARS.
- The “Job Title” box now contains drop-down options for the roles of Certifier, Alternate Certifier, Submitter, Alternate Submitter, Food Service Director, School Administrator and Other User.

The following enhancements have been made to the “Application Packet Summary” section of the 2016-2017 Application Packet:

- There are now two sections on the “Application Packet Summary” page for both Submitters and Certifiers: the first summary refers to the School Nutrition Programs Application Packet, and the second summary refers to the Food Distribution Agreement Documents. After certifying the individual required documents, both sections must be certified by clicking on the bright green buttons titled, “Certify School Nutrition Programs Packet” and “Certify Food Distribution Agreement Documents”. If the SFA does not wish to receive Commodity Foods, this can also be noted on the same screen.

Electronic Applications: SFAs 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.**

Required elements of the application are:

- The *Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, Frequently Asked Questions* (formerly, *Letter to Parent*) and the *How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals* instructions **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 *2016-2017 Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, Frequently Asked Questions* and the *How to Apply for Free and Reduced Price School Meals* instructions to Jackie Bricker at Jacqueline.Bricker@ag.state.nj.us .

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP): The start of the CEP election season begins on May 15th and the deadline to apply is August 31st. Any SFA 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. SFAs that intend to apply must complete the application process in SNEARS using data as of April 1st. Once approved for CEP, SFAs are still obligated to complete the rest of the application packet, starting with the Letter to Parent.

Please refer to the CEP annual notification list of eligible SFAs 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 and for “veteran” CEP districts. It is highly recommended that interested sponsors view these webinars for further instructions on applying for CEP. A webinar focusing on meal counting and claiming in CEP districts will be also be offered in September.

Direct Certification: Effective July 1, 2016, Direct Certification must also be completed a minimum of four times during the school year according to the following time schedule:

1. July 15th – August 30, 2016
2. September 1st – September 30, 2016
3. October 1st – October 30, 2016
4. March 1st – March 30, 2017

SFAs are strongly encouraged to do the matching process **monthly**. This will increase the total number of DC students, therefore reducing the total number of applications to determine and verify.

In addition, there are now two file upload processes to choose from, depending on the SFAs’ total enrollment with access to meals:

- **Batch Process:** SFAs whose total enrollment (with access to meals) is greater than or equal to 5000 must use the Batch Process. This will allow large SFAs to upload multiple enrollment files at the same time for processing. The system will send a notification e-mail to the SFA when the files are ready to view to complete the matching process. The turnaround time may take up to twenty-four hours.
- **Regular DC Process:** SFAs whose total enrollment (with access to meals) is less than 5000 can use either the batch process or the regular DC process to obtain direct certification matches the same day.

Questions may be directed to the School Nutrition Programs Office at 609-984-0692.