



Office for Prekindergarten through Grade 12 Education
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To: School Food Service Directors/Managers

From: Paula Tyner-Doyle, Coordinator

Date: March 18, 2014

Subject: Extending Flexibility for RCCIs in the National School Lunch Program

On July 16, 2012, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) issued memorandum SP 38-2012, which allowed Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs), with State agency approval, to serve the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) meal pattern in effect for the highest age/grade group served to all residential students. In order to utilize this flexibility, the RCCI must meet all three of the following criteria: 1) be a juvenile detention or correctional facility; 2) serve children in different age/grade groups; and 3) have legitimate safety concerns, or State juvenile justice laws or regulations related to offering meals with varying amounts of food within the same meal period.

Since issuance of SP 38-2012, school food service operators and State agencies have asked FNS to consider offering additional flexibility to RCCIs that are not juvenile justice facilities, but serve specific, special populations of students, due to the unique needs of these populations. This memorandum extends additional meal pattern and dietary specification flexibility to RCCIs for both lunch and breakfast, as discussed below.

EXTENSION OF MEAL PATTERN FLEXIBILITY IN SP 38-2012 TO ADDITIONAL RCCIS

One particular challenge that RCCIs have identified with the meal standards is the potential for violence among students at certain types of facilities when they are not served the same portion sized meal. RCCIs that serve special populations, such as students with severe cognitive disabilities or who are at-risk for incarceration, often have legitimate concerns about student unrest at meal times, but cannot use the flexibility granted in SP 38-2012 because they are not considered juvenile detention centers or correctional facilities.

This memorandum extends the meal pattern flexibility offered in SP 38-2012, service of the highest age/grade group in residence to all students, to RCCIs that are alternative schools for students of different age/grade groups that can demonstrate operational limitations to separating age/grade groups and can show legitimate safety concerns if students are served different portions. The RCCI must submit a request to the State agency to utilize this flexibility and clearly articulate the safety concerns to the satisfaction of the State. State agencies must consider RCCI requests to implement this option on a case-by-case basis and ensure that the above criteria are met.

It is anticipated that the extension of this flexibility will help address the safety concerns raised by RCCIs, and result in an overall improvement of the meals they serve.

As implementation of the new meal pattern continues, State agencies are encouraged to work with school food authorities (SFAs) to assist them in meeting the new requirements. We anticipate that the additional flexibility extended to RCCIs as reflected in this memorandum will continue to facilitate implementation of the new meal pattern in School Year 2013-2014 and beyond. As previously described, feedback from SFAs and State Agencies continues to be encouraged.

If you have any questions regarding this memo, please contact your Child Nutrition Representative at 518-473-8781.

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