



Office of P-20 Education Policy
Child Nutrition Program Administration
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To: Superintendents
Executive Directors
School Business Officials
School Food Service Directors/Managers

From: Paula Tyner-Doyle, Director

Date: June 2019

Subject: Increase in State Reimbursement for Reduced-Price Meals

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify School Food Authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program of an increase in State reimbursement for meals and snacks claimed in the reduced-price category effective July 1, 2019.

The increase in State reimbursement for reduced-price meals and snacks is a result of additional funding approved in the 2019 New York State budget that is intended to cover the student cost of 25 cents for breakfast and lunch meals and the student cost of 15 cents for snacks served in the Afterschool Snack Program.

Beginning July 1, 2019, students approved for reduced-price meals must receive breakfast, lunch and snack meals at no charge. As stated above, New York State funding will provide an additional 25 cents in State reimbursement for each reimbursable breakfast and lunch meal served and an additional 15 cents for each reimbursable snack meal served to a reduced-price student to cover the cost previously paid by the student.

The New York State Education Department (SED) would like to stress the importance of proper training and terminology when discussing and implementing this positive change. SFAs should keep in mind that although reduced-price students will not be charged a fee for their breakfast and/or lunch meals, these students are not considered “free eligible” in the Child Nutrition Programs. Using the term “free” may imply that these students have been approved eligible for free meals based on the income eligibility guidelines which could result in confusion for families and for food service staff responsible for claiming and reporting free and reduced-price data. SFAs should consider using the phrase “at no charge” when discussing this State initiative.

Please see the questions and answers below for additional information on how to properly implement this change. If you have any questions, please contact your Child Nutrition Representative at 518-473-8781.

Questions and Answers

1. Does this change affect how SFAs approve students for reduced-price meals?

No. This change does not affect how SFAs certify students for free or reduced-price meals. SFAs should refer to the USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals for additional information on the certification and benefit issuance process.

2. Does this change affect how SFAs claim meals for reduced-price students?

No. SFAs must continue to claim meals/snacks served to reduced-price students in the reduced-price category. Although reduced-price students will receive their reimbursable breakfast, lunch and snack meals at no charge, the meals must be claimed in the reduced-price reimbursement category when placing claims for reimbursement.

3. Do students whose reduced-price benefits are carried over from the previous school year during the 30 operating day carryover period receive meals at no charge?

Yes. This change is in effect beginning July 1, 2019. As always, SFAs must carryover a child's eligibility status from the previous school year for no less than 30 operating days, unless a new eligibility determination is made prior to the end of the 30-day carryover period. During this carryover period, students approved for reduced-price meals in the previous school year must receive their breakfast and/or lunch and/or snack meals at no charge and must be claimed in the reduced-price reimbursement category when placing claims for reimbursement.

4. Does this change affect how SFAs conduct Income Verification?

No. Income Verification must be conducted as usual. SFAs must ensure they accurately report reduced-price students in the proper category on the FNS-742- Verification Collection Report (Attachment G). SFAs should refer to the USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals for additional information on the Income Verification process.

5. What steps can the SFA take to ensure this change is properly implemented?

SFAs must ensure proper training is provided to the individuals responsible for certification and benefit issuance, placing claims for reimbursement and to the front-line cafeteria staff responsible for counting meals and collecting money at the point of service.

SFAs that use an electronic Point of Sale (POS) system at the point of service may need to work with their software providers to adjust their POS system settings to remove the 25 cent charge for a reduced-price reimbursable meal and the 15 cent charge for a reimbursable snack.

All SFAs must ensure their point of service counting system continues to track meals/snacks served to reduced-price students in the reduced-price reimbursement category.

6. How does this change affect the written communications sent to families at the beginning of or during the school year?

SFAs must ensure all related program letters and policies are updated to reflect this funding change. This includes, but is not limited to, the Parent Letter, Public Announcement, Notification Letter for School Meals and Meal Charge/Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Policy.

The SED Child Nutrition prototype letters have been updated and may be found in the Attachments section of the 2019-2020 Free and Reduced-Price Income Eligibility and Policy Information Booklet on the Child Nutrition Knowledge Center (CNKC) website.

SED recommends SFAs use the SED prototype letters to ensure all required and correct information is included in all program materials that are released to households of enrolled students.

7. What if the SFA mistakenly charges a reduced-price student 25 cents for a reimbursable meal or 15 cents for a reimbursable snack?

SFAs that mistakenly charge a student 25 cents for a reimbursable breakfast and/or lunch or 15 cents for a reimbursable snack after the student has been approved eligible for reduced-price meals must immediately issue a refund to the student for all reimbursable meals/snacks the student paid for.

8. What if the SFA mistakenly claimed meals served to reduced-price students in the free reimbursement category?

If an SFA has mistakenly claimed students approved for reduced-price meals in the free reimbursement category, the SFA must adjust their breakfast and/or lunch and/or snack claims within 60 days of the monthly claim submission deadline in the Child Nutrition Management System (CNMS) to correct the counting and claiming errors.

If the SFA identifies claims outside of the 60-day deadline that were incorrectly filed, the SFA must follow the SED late claim guidance and protocols when adjusting claims.

The SFA must immediately implement corrective action to ensure all claims are properly submitted to SED.

9. How will SFAs be notified of the 2019-2020 School Year Reimbursement Rates?

The 2019-2020 School Year Reimbursement Rates will be released on the Child Nutrition Knowledge Center (CNKC) once they become available.

10. How does this affect the State reimbursement for SFAs that are approved to receive the additional State Subsidy For Purchasing New York State Food Products?

SFAs that are approved to receive the additional State Subsidy for purchasing New York State Food Products will receive a total of 50 cents for each reduced-price reimbursable **lunch** meal claimed for reimbursement.