

MEMORANDUM

TO: School Superintendents and Business Officials

FROM: Cheriee Watterson, Division of Child and Adult Nutrition Services

DATE: March 29, 2022

SUBJECT: Return to Normal School Nutrition Programs SY 2022-23

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued numerous waivers and additional funding for School Nutrition Programs (SNP) – allowing many students to eat free school meals without collecting applications. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 was signed into law (public law 117-103) on March 15. This law did not extend any special authority to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). This means that, unless Congress takes special action:

- **There will be no extension of universal free meals in SY 2022-23.**
- **There will be no extra funding for School Nutrition Programs in SY 2022-23.**

With this move back to pre-COVID practices, schools should not plan to offer universal free meals to students in SY 2022-23. To claim free or reduced-price meals, schools will need to collect student eligibility through direct certification or with an approved household application. Only schools that are approved to operate the Community Eligibility Provision in SY 2022-23 are exempt from collecting student eligibility. Further, normal SNP meal reimbursement rates will go into effect on July 1, 2022; USDA will release rates for 2022-23 in July.

Most students will not have free or reduced-price benefits from SY 2021-22 to carry them into the first 30 days of SY 2022-23. Only students with an approved free or reduced-price application on file in SY 2021-22 will receive carryover benefits. Most students will start the year paying for lunch and breakfast until they are either directly certified for free meals or the household submits a free and reduced-price meal application that is approved by the school.

Because of this, schools are encouraged to start communicating with families now to let them know that universal free meals will not be available in SY 2022-23. Additionally, schools should begin identifying eligible students as soon as possible before the new school year begins.

Finally, federal regulations require that a program's net cash resources do not exceed three months of average operating expenditures. For SY 2022-23, schools that exceed this limit, may apply for a two-year spend-down plan. A memo with additional information on this subject will be shared in the coming weeks.

This information has been communicated with your school food service directors, and we will continue to provide information and technical assistance as needed.

Please note that the contents of this memo are subject to change depending upon the release of future USDA guidance or Congressional action. Contact Child and Adult Nutrition Services (CANS) at 605-773-3413 or DOE.SchoolLunch@state.sd.us with questions.