



* snacks, breakfast, dinner, milk and more



Food and Nutrition Service

MDE Update

February 2014

Greetings! We just might be half way through this winter, and are able to look forward to spring. Let's hope so! The latest news on the school nutrition front includes important information about denying meals to students who do not have the funds to pay for a meal. I know that you are all working hard to provide students tasty, nutritious meals. None of us would refuse a child a meal when there are other avenues for payment, nor would we ever do so in a way that is shameful or embarrassing to the student. Look for information, thoughts and ideas about this topic and more in this issue of "The Lunch Line."

Stay warm and keep looking for warmer weather! It can't be too far away!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deb Lukkonen'.

Deb Lukkonen, Supervisor
School Nutrition Programs

Hot Topics

Meal Policy Guidance

Of primary importance is the fact that it is difficult for hungry children to learn. And for too many of Minnesota's students, school meals may be the only nutritious meals they receive. But sometimes we find ourselves in the difficult position of a student that does not have sufficient funds in their lunch account to pay for a meal. What can we do in these situations? USDA has given approval (see USDA Memo 1 at right) to use food service funds to lower or eliminate reduced-price meal charges. Here's are a few additional resources to help you develop a meal guidance policy that works for your school: [MDE Meal Policy Guidance](#) and [USDA Guidance](#).

USDA Memos/Communication

- 1. Discretionary elimination of reduced-price meals**
[Through this USDA memo](#), operators of the school food service fund are given permission to use funds from the nonprofit school food service account to lower or eliminate reduced-price student meal charges.
- 2. Proposed Rule on Professional Standards Released**
On February 4, 2014, USDA released proposed regulations on professional standards for all school nutrition employees that include mandatory education, training and certification. The rule also requires states to provide training. [View USDA's announcement and a link to the proposed regulations.](#) [Comment on the proposed rule by April 7, 2014.](#)
- 3. Food Service Management Contracts Renewing for SY 2014-15**
[View Requirements for renewing management contracts.](#) This includes a list of the school food authorities that have management contracts that are renewable for 2014-15, according to MDE records.
[View the Required Template for renewing a management contract.](#) 2014-15 prices or fees may be increased by no more than 1.8 percent from 2013-14 prices or fees, based on the Consumer Price Index
- 4. Final rule on independent review of free/reduced-price meal applications by Local Education Authorities (LEA)**
[Via the Federal Register](#), effective March 10, 2014, an LEA must notify a household and provide free/reduced-price meal benefits (if approved) within 10 days of receipt of an Application for Educational Benefits. Also, effective July 1, 2014, LEAs identified with a "high level of, or risk for, administrative error" will be required to conduct second reviews of applications before notifying households of approval or denial of meal benefits. MDE will set up a system for affected LEAs to report their results of second reviews to MDE. MDE will notify affected LEAs prior to the start of school year 2014-15.

Hot Topics (cont.)

School Breakfast Week

March 3-7, 2014

It's time to highlight and grow your breakfast program! The National School Breakfast Week theme is "Take Time for School Breakfast."

Use this week to spread the word that school breakfast is convenient, healthy, and a real timesaver for families during busy weekday mornings! Here's some links that will help make your breakfast program a success all school year!

- [National School Breakfast Week](#)
- [USDA Breakfast Helps](#)
- [Why the School Breakfast Program is Important](#)

Marketing, Menus and More!

Free Salad Bar!!!

What could be better than something for *free*!

Let's Move Salad Bars to MIDWEST Schools is a special campaign under the umbrella of the national Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools initiative. The goal of this campaign is to increase children's fruit and vegetable consumption by donating salad bars to schools in MN as well as IL, IN, MI, OH, and WI. Over the last three years, salad bars have been donated to over 400 Midwest schools, 48 of which went to Minnesota schools.

It's easy for schools to apply for a salad bar. [View the website to complete an application.](#)

Training Opportunities

MDE—Food and Nutrition Service Webinars

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) -Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is offering an ***Essentials for School Nutrition*** training series that is specifically designed for charter schools, private schools, and staff new to the school meal programs. The series will be offered on four consecutive Tuesday afternoons from 2:00 – 4:00 PM beginning March 4, 2014. The classes will be presented simultaneously in webinar format and live at MDE in Roseville. No registration is required and the training series is offered free of charge. **Training is required for all new schools just starting participation in the National School Lunch Program.** If you have any questions, contact MDE-FNS at 651-582-8526, 1-800-366-8922 (MN Toll-free) or e-mail mde.fns@state.mn.us.

What Administrators Need to Know

March 4, 2014, 2:00-4:00 PM., Conference Center A- Room CC 1-2. This course is for new school administrators and directors, and provides a high-level overview of school nutrition program opportunities and requirements. Areas covered include: meal access and reimbursement, nutrition quality and meal components, resource management and general program compliance. [March 4 webinar training.](#)

Meal Benefits Determination and Administration

March 11, 2014, 2:00-4:00 PM., Conference Center A- Room CC 1-2. This course is for school staff who approve meal applications and maintain meal benefit information in the student database. Participants will learn to correctly approve and process *Applications for Educational Benefits*, directly certify students for meal benefits, create rosters and maintain the required documentation for compliance with program regulations. [March 11 webinar training.](#)

Meal Service Essentials

March 18, 2014, 2:00-4:00 PM., Conference Center A- Room CC 1-2. This workshop is for school staff who plan, prepare and/or serve school meals. Participants will learn the school meal patterns, the Offer vs. Serve provision, and records required to document meals served to meet program requirements. [March 18 webinar training.](#)

Meal Counting and Claiming

March 25, 2014, 2:00-4:00 PM., Conference Center A- Room CC 1-2. This session is for school staff responsible for obtaining and recording meal counts and completing the monthly claim for reimbursement. Participants will learn how to obtain accurate point-of-service meal counts, complete claim editing, and submit a claim for reimbursement in the Cyber-Linked Interactive Child Nutrition System (CLiCS). [March 25 webinar raining.](#)

More Webinars and Resources!

- **Action for Healthy Kids:** [Wellness Policy Help at Your Fingertips](#)
- **Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)**
 - [Breakfast Program: Stakeholder Engagement.](#) Thursday, March 13, 2014 at 2:00 PM.
 - [Afterschool Meals: Starting the Transition from Afterschool to Summer Meals.](#) Wednesday, February 19, 2014 at 1:00 PM.