



## Wyoming Department of Education

Dr. Jim McBride, Superintendent of Public Instruction

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### MEMORANDUM NO. 2009-184

**TO:** School District Superintendents  
School District Principals

**FROM:** Jim McBride, Ed.D. 

**DATE:** November 20, 2009

**SUBJECT:** USDA Free and Reduced Price Meal Guidance

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#### USDA MEMO FOR REFERENCE IS ATTACHED

Free and Reduced Price Meals are critical to the success of students that are in need. The attached memo is a good summary of a program that is already in place in your district.

There is no new guidance in this memo to act on at this time but it is an excellent summary and reminder of all that can be done to promote the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. There are many ways that a family can qualify for free and reduced benefits.

The processes currently in place for each Food Service Director to identify families that qualify for free and reduced priced meals within the NSLP and SBP follow.

1. Direct Certification letters that are received from the WDE each August identifying students that qualify for SNAP. If one student in the family qualifies, all children in the family are free.
2. Income Eligibility Packets are sent to the parents at the beginning of the year to identify students that are eligible.
3. Principals in individual schools are aware that they can step in and fill out the Income Eligibility forms for a student in need.

Please contact Crystal English-Forgey, Nutrition Programs Consultant, at 307-777-6270 with any questions or concerns.

JM/TJ/rs  
Attachment



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250



OCT 23 2009

Dr. Jim McBride  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Wyoming Department of Education  
2300 Capitol Avenue, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Hathaway Building  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002-0050

Dear Dr. McBride:

School nutrition programs are a tremendous resource for families nationwide. As more families face unemployment or economic hardship, we believe it is vitally important that school administrators do all they can to ensure that eligible children have access to free and reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). To that end, we recommend the following:

- **Make sure you effectively use direct certification to provide free meals to any child from a household participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).**

Direct certification uses information from SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, to bring eligible households into the school meal programs without a household application. Although one direct certification or match of household information between the local education agency and the SNAP office is required per school year, we encourage all schools to conduct direct certification more frequently in order to provide new SNAP households prompt access to free school meals.

- **Make your community more aware of the availability of free and reduced price school meals.**

In addition to sending households a school meal information/application package at the beginning of the school year, consider other ways to promote the NSLP and SBP throughout the year through the school newsletter, website, and special school events. Through your contacts with diverse community groups, please inform them of the availability of free and reduced price meals for eligible schoolchildren and remind them that families may apply for these meals at any time.

- **Ensure that children in need are approved for free or reduced price meals.**

Educators with daily contact with children in schools know when children's economic circumstances change. While we all endeavor to make non-participating families aware of the available benefits and encourage them to apply, some eligible families may still not submit an application. To assist such families, school officials who are familiar with an individual family's circumstances have the authority to submit an application on the children's behalf. You may exercise this option on a case-by-case basis on behalf of a child based on your personal knowledge of the household size and income information.

As you know, school breakfasts and lunches contribute significantly to the well-being of schoolchildren, and are particularly important for low-income children. In times of economic uncertainty, the role of the school meal programs is more significant and timely. School meals are a great value and families of all income levels should be encouraged to participate as parents look for ways to stretch their budgets during difficult economic times.

We thank you for all you do to educate and safeguard children and trust that we can count on your support to increase vulnerable families' access to the school meal programs. Please disseminate this letter to your local superintendents for their use.

Sincerely,



Kevin W. Concannon  
Under Secretary  
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services



Janey Thornton, Ph.D, SNS  
Deputy Under Secretary  
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services