

# Wednesday's Wisdom

April 2012 – 3rd edition

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April 25, 2012

This Wednesday's Wisdom is divided into two sections.

1. Clarification re: meal charging policies for food service operations participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).
2. Healthier US School Challenge revisions.

If you have any questions, please contact us at 271-3646.

Thank you from the BNPS staff

## **Meal Charging Policy clarification in the National School Lunch Programs**

We would like to share with you further technical assistance recently distributed to the field regarding the meal charging topic. Recently, a question came into the office regarding the following: if a school food service gets money from the general fund or other source to pay off debt and then the school food service pays the debt and zeros out the student's account at the end of every school year, how will you continue to hold the household responsible for the bad debt? This question was sent to USDA for clarification and the following guidance was received:

*At the end of the school year when there is an outstanding charge balance on a student's account – the school foodservice account must be balanced by the LEA's (in NH an LEA is the SAU) general fund or other source of money reimbursing the school food service account. The money used for balancing out the food service account cannot be food service money.*

*For establishing practices and procedures for how the SAU is to collect the bad debt to replenish the general account or other entity where the money came from would be for each local school board and school administration to decide on how they handle bad debt. This may vary from each district, as to what approach they find most effective.*

Therefore, it is up to each SAU to set up their own procedures as to the collection of the bad debt and then replenish the general fund or wherever the money came from. Please be aware that the "replenishment" needs to occur to avoid double dipping of funds – i.e. you would want to establish procedures to avoid the following scenario: getting money from the general fund to make the program whole, then at a later date getting money from the parent to pay off the child's account and keeping both. You will want to develop a system to return the money to the entity lending it to the school food service if you are not going to zero out the child's account at the end of the school year.

## Healthier US School Challenge Revisions

The Healthier US School Challenge (HUSSC) will be going through some revisions that will affect some things and not others. Please see below:

1. *Item not affected:* Using the current Healthier US School Challenge (food sections) to ready your food service program for the 6 cents certification continues to be a great idea. USDA is suggesting that school food service operations align their programs to the food sections of the HUSSC. While it does not guarantee your program will be certified, it will help in this process.
2. *Item that is affected:* The revisions mean that on June 30, 2012, the new HUSSC criteria begin. We do not know exactly what the criteria are at this point, but we do know that it is changing. Therefore, if you were thinking of submitting the paperwork to our office for approval in the HUSSC, the paperwork must be into us by **May 7, 2012** in order to meet the June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. And, if you are currently going through any training for the HUSSC, please ensure that the trainer knows about these changes and will be incorporating them into any training that they are doing. Otherwise, you will be trained to the wrong criteria.