

Wednesday's Wisdom

April 2012 - 2nd edition

April 18, 2012

“TOP TEN ACTION LIST COUNTDOWN”

THINGS TO WORK ON NOW TO GET READY FOR THE NEW USDA REGULATIONS

10. The new USDA regulations state that all school food service programs must work under the Traditional food-based meal pattern.

Action: If your food service program is not working under a Traditional food-based meal pattern, start now to make the switch. Refer to the USDA manual, *A Menu Planner for Healthy School Meals* for additional guidance. Think about training staff and notifying students now as to what a reimbursable meal will consist of under the Traditional food based meal pattern.

9. In the new meal pattern, just as in the old food-based meal pattern, grains are counted per week. It depends on the grade group as to how many servings of grains per week are needed. Please take a look at the new meal pattern <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf> (Pgs. 4102 and 4103) for the serving of grains per week for the grade groupings in your school(s). The biggest change in this category is that at least half of the grains offered must be whole grain rich. This means that you will also need to read labels. If a whole grain is the first item on the ingredient list, then it is a whole grain product. Some examples of whole grains include: whole wheat flour (wheat flour is white flour), oatmeal, brown rich, graham flour, whole grain barley, bulgur, and rye berries.

Action: View current menu for grain offerings. Are at least half of the grains offered on the menu made from whole grains? If not, then where can changes be made? Refer to the Healthier US School Challenge at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/2012criteria.html> for help with additional whole grain foods.

8. The new regulations allow for those schools that are certified, to receive 6 cents more per reimbursable meal. Currently, USDA is writing the regulation for the State agencies to use when certifying schools for the 6 cents per reimbursable meal increase. Once Bureau staff is trained in the certification process, we will then begin performing certification reviews starting in the 2012-2013 school year.

Action: One suggestion may be to look at the food sections of the Healthier US School Challenge as a guide. To see the HUSSC requirements, go to the following web site

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/HealthierUS/2012criteria.html>. While it does not ensure that you will be certified, it will help in getting your program on its way to certification.

7. Color your way to compliance! The new regulations require school foodservice to offer vegetables from certain subgroups per week. Some of the vegetables in these subgroups are grouped together depending on the color of the vegetable while others are grouped together depending on the amount of carbohydrates (starchy vegetable category) or protein they contain. Go to: www.choosemyplate.gov to see the subcategories of vegetables.

The new meal pattern requires weekly requirements for vegetable subgroups, which are dark green, starchy, red/orange, beans/peas and other. At least a serving of each subgroup is required per week. Changes can be found at the Final Rule Nutrition Standards: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf> (Pgs. 4102 and 4103).

Action: Take a look at your May and June menus and determine if each vegetable subgroup is represented each week. Keep in mind that the vegetables in the “other vegetables” subgroup can be served and counted toward a vegetable in a reimbursable meal; however, the reason why these vegetables are not in any of the other four subgroups is that they do not contain certain nutrients in a high enough quantity.

6. Access to “free” drinking water. The new regulations require that schools ensure that water is available to students, free of charge, for meal periods.

Action: Survey all schools under your supervision to determine if there is a working water fountain in the cafeteria or wherever the students eat their meals. If it is found that free water is not available to students, then you will need to figure out a way to make free water available to those who want it. An example may be - fill a large beverage dispenser with water (some of the school’s sports teams use these) and place it onto a cart. Place cups next to the dispenser so that students will have access to free water.

5. Fluid milk and fat content. The new regulations allow only low fat milk options to be served. Allowable low fat options, include: 1.) white milk - 1% or lower fat content (1%, ½% or skim—Fat Free) and 2.) flavored milk can only be made with skim, or Fat Free, milk.

Action: Take a look at all the milk that is purchased in your foodservice. Does it meet the fat requirement? If no, start now to purchase only the milk fat products allowed.

4. Competitive foods. The new State Minimum Standards rules support any USDA competitive foods and beverage regulations. Please see the Technical Advisory on the competitive food rules at http://education.nh.gov/program/nutrition/school_lunch.htm.

Action: Take a look at all foods and beverages that are sold during the time school is in session. Bring information back to the district’s wellness committee and determine what set of nutrition standards will be followed. Please note that there are nutrition standards found in the HUSSC. Remember that a la carte foods or those foods that can be a part of a reimbursable meal are subject to the nutrient standards for reimbursable meals (Please see the Final Rule “Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.” This can be found at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf>)

3. Wellness Policy information. The new regulations require that the district’s wellness policy be placed in a public place. This includes informing the public of implementation steps for the wellness policy.

Action: An example of making the wellness policy public is to place the policy and implementation plan onto the school’s, district’s or SAU’s website. This allows the public to make comment. Another suggestion would be for someone from the wellness group to register on the WellSAT website (www.wellsat.org) and answer the questions asked. The program will: 1.) score the wellness policy, 2.) give suggestions as to possible improvements, and 3.) offer resources.

2. Sodium will be limited. In the new regulations, there is a cap on the amount of sodium that will be allowed in both breakfast and lunch. The cap has certain maximum limits over the span of a number of years. Please go to <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf> (scroll down until you see the sodium requirements chart) to see these maximum limits.

Action: Look at your menus to flag pre-prepared products and talk with vendors now about the sodium restrictions. Look at your recipes and lower the salt amount in the recipe if you can. For example, look for pre-prepared products in recipes that are high in sodium, such as pre-prepared soy sauce, barbecue sauce etc. Start now to purchase the lower sodium versions of these products. Look for natural salt free seasonings that can be added to foods/recipes to enhance the flavor of foods being served.

1. When in doubt call 271-3646. We may not have all the answers for you at this time, but we can forward your question to USDA. Also, please remember to visit the bureau’s website at: http://education.nh.gov/program/nutrition/child_nutrition_programs.htm frequently. We will consistently post policy memos and any other information that we receive onto our website.

Above all.....please don’t panic. We are here to help guide and assist the process as we move through the changes together.