



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

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MEMO CODE: SP 15-2009

DATE: February 27, 2009

SUBJECT: Ways to Assist Families during Economic Downturn

TO: Regional Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Agencies  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

This memorandum is to clarify the effect of year-long duration of eligibility on changes in income that may occur during the school year and to discuss how local educational agencies (LEAs) may assist families who may be experiencing financial hardships.

**Reporting Changes during the School Year**

While households are not required to report changes in circumstances during the school year, a household may contact LEAs to report any changes; a new application is not required. When a change increases the level of benefits (reduced price to free or adding additional members to the household), we encourage LEAs to put the change into effect within three operating days.

**Applying during the School Year**

Households may apply at any time during the school year, even if an earlier application had been denied. The requirement for year-long duration does not preclude applying or reapplying during the school year. However, households reapplying because they did not complete the verification process are subject to requirements in Part 8, N. (Households that Reapply for Program Benefits) of the January 2008 version of the Eligibility Manual for School Meals (manual).

**More Frequent Direct Certification**

Because families may become eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or the Temporary Assistance Needy Families Program at different times, we encourage LEAs to conduct additional direct certification activities to identify newly eligible children. The LEA should also work with the school district's homeless liaison to promptly identify eligible children.

**Transfer students**

Because families may be moving to new school districts, we would like to remind LEAs that they can share/accept a child's existing eligibility determination. Please see Part 3, O. (Transferring Eligibility between LEAs) of the manual for additional information.

**Outreach**

We encourage LEAs to inform families about the availability of free and reduced price meal benefits for eligible children and to utilize the procedures described in this memo. Further, we would like to remind LEAs about their ability to complete an application for a child known to be eligible if the household fails to apply. The requirements for this process are discussed in Part 3, J. (Households That Fail to Apply) of the manual.

State agencies should contact their Regional office if they have any questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CYNTHIA LONG  
Director  
Child Nutrition Division