



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 2120

RICHMOND 23218-2120

SNP Memo #2013-2014-04

TO: Directors, Supervisors, and Contact Persons Addressed

FROM: Catherine Digilio Grimes, MS, RD, LDN, SNS, *Catherine Digilio Grimes*
Director, School Nutrition Programs

DATE: October 3, 2013

SUBJECT: Information Regarding the Federal Government Shutdown and its Impact on the School Nutrition Programs

As you are aware, due to a lapse in Federal government funding, USDA and other Federal agencies are shutdown until further notice. This memorandum provides information regarding funding for Federal reimbursement for meals/snacks served under the NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SMP, as well as the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). Questions have also arisen regarding furloughed Federal employees and their household eligibility for free or reduced price meals. This memo provides the most recent guidance from USDA on that eligibility issue.

Federal Reimbursement

School division claims for reimbursement for meals served to students during the months of August and September are now due. The funding for reimbursement for August and September claims is Federal fiscal year (FY) 2013 funding and is not impacted by the FY 2014 lapse. All claims for August and September for NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SMP will be processed and paid by DOE as they are received. FFVP claims for 1st quarter funds (expenses incurred through September 30) are also reimbursed with FY 2013 funds and will be processed and paid as they are received.

USDA has identified funding that will be passed through to state agencies to reimburse school divisions for NSLP, SBP, ASP, and SMP meals/snacks served to students in October. The October reimbursement claims will not be submitted by school divisions to DOE until November 1, or later. October claims for reimbursement will be processed and paid by DOE as they are received; adequate funding will be available. At this time, there is no information regarding funding beyond October. If necessary, when information becomes available DOE will notify school divisions regarding funding for meals served in November. FFVP funding for the 2nd-4th quarters of the school year (FY 2014 funds) will be made available to states once the Federal government resumes operations. This could cause a delay in FFVP reimbursement if the Federal government shutdown is prolonged.

Eligibility of Furloughed Federal Employee Households for Free or Reduced Price Meals

USDA GUIDANCE:

Question: Can households of furloughed employees be approved for free or reduced price school meal benefits? Should they be removed from the program when the furlough is over?

Answer: The income eligibility guidelines for free and reduced price school meals are based on annual income. While there is no prohibition on households with furloughed employees applying for benefits during a furlough, school food authorities (SFAs) should manage the application process in a manner which reflects their unique circumstances. During the furlough period, these households may not have information on the duration of the furlough or its ultimate impact on household income. Therefore, it is reasonable for SFAs to remind households that free or reduced price eligibility is intended to reflect actual annual income. School districts should urge any families who are approved for free or reduced-price meals based on zero income or a reduction in total household income during a furlough period to notify the school division should the economic hardship they had anticipated due to the furlough be remedied by a return to work and/or restoration of pay for the furlough period.

In addition, families should be made aware that if they are selected for verification later in the school year, they will be required to produce documentation of actual income for the application month.

In most cases, it will not be possible for the approving official to determine if a household with zero income is a household with a furloughed federal employee. School divisions are not required to investigate zero income households and should base their eligibility determination solely on the information submitted on the application with regard to total household income and household size as compared to the Income Eligibility Guidelines (IEG). If the household contacts the school division at a later date to indicate they have had a change in their income and wish to be removed from free or reduced price eligibility, the approving official should comply with the household's request.

Detailed guidance on approving income applications can be found in the *USDA Eligibility Guidance Manual*, which was slightly revised in August 2013, *Part 3: Processing Applications*.

If there are questions, please contact the school nutrition program specialist assigned to your division or Office of School Nutrition Programs staff at (804) 225-2074.

CDG/LAF/idl