



## State of New Jersey

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To: School Business Administrators, Charter School Leads; Non-Public School Administrators;  
Food Service Directors of Schools Participating in the School Nutrition Programs

From: Arleen Ramos-Szatmary, Coordinator  
School Nutrition Programs

Date: September 4, 2024

Subject: Back to School Reminders for School Year 2024-2025

As the 2024-2025 School Year begins, the School Nutrition Programs Unit would like to highlight newly released changes and requirements for the new School Year. Please take a few moments to read the important reminders and updates noted below.

**New Jersey Expanded Income Eligibility (NJEIE) State Supplement:** The 2024-2025 School Year brings the expansion of NJEIE to nonpublic schools and increased eligibility for New Jersey students. Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, each public, charter and nonpublic school student who has an annual household income that is between 186 and 224 percent of the federal poverty level will qualify for meals free of cost at the point of meal service using the [New Jersey Expanded Income Eligibility Guidelines](#).

Students qualifying for NJEIE will be considered **federally paid and New Jersey Expanded Income Eligible**. The State of New Jersey provides participating public and charter schools the difference between the USDA federal free rate of reimbursement and the USDA paid rate of reimbursement for eligible students. Participating School Food Authorities (SFAs) may access the FY2025 Reimbursement Rates for [Public Schools](#) and [Nonpublic Schools](#) for specific reimbursement rates for students qualifying for NJEIE.

Nonpublic SFAs who have not viewed the [How to Determine the School Meals and Summer EBT Application for SY2024 - 2025](#) webinar or who have not attended one of the live training sessions presented in August must view the webinar immediately and prior to determining applications. SFAs may also refer to the [June 24, 2024 Memo](#) for additional information and links to corresponding resources.

**State Payment for Reduced Price Meals:** A reminder that New Jersey Statutes 18A:33-2.1 requiring the State to pay the difference between the federal allocation for reduced-price breakfasts and reduced-price lunches served to students who are federally eligible for reduced price meals is still in effect. Effective July 1, 2024, nonpublic school students are also eligible.

All students determined as reduced price eligible will continue to receive breakfast and lunch meals at no cost to the student. SFAs must continue to maintain the total number of reduced-price eligible students, the number of reduced-price breakfasts and lunches claimed, and all internal recordkeeping practices related to the reduced-price category.

**Hunger Free NJ Outreach Toolkit:** With the increased number of students eligible for no cost school meals and Summer EBT benefits, it is vital that families submit a School Meals and Summer EBT Application. Created in partnership between Hunger Free New Jersey and the NJ Office of the Food Security Advocate, the [School Meals and](#)

[Summer EBT Application Outreach Toolkit](#) provides helpful resources to assist families gain access to free school meals, Summer EBT benefits, and additional resources.

**Child Nutrition Programs Final Rule: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans:** On April 25, 2024, USDA published the final rule titled, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), which is the next step in continuing the improvement of school meals.

While this rulemaking is effective July 1, 2024, USDA is gradually phasing in required changes over time. Program operators are **not required** to make changes to their menus until school year 2025-2026 at the earliest, though they are welcome to adopt or pilot the new regulations in the coming year.

In the coming months, NJDA will provide guidance on the many changes resulting from the Final Rule. USDA's [Updates to the School Nutrition Standards](#) website also has a plethora of resources designed to assist Child Nutrition Professionals in understanding the new nutrition standards and menu planning/operational flexibilities.

**Civil Rights:** Please note the latest *And Justice for All* posters containing the updated nondiscrimination statement are on backorder. *And Justice for All* posters currently posted **must not be removed** until replaced with the new poster.

Civil Rights training must be provided on an annual basis by **September 30, 2024** to all frontline staff and those employees who supervise frontline staff. "Frontline staff" are defined as all employees who interact with Child Nutrition program applicants or participants. Acceptable training methods include the [Civil Rights for School Nutrition Program Professionals](#) webinar and the [Civil Rights Self-Study Guide](#) found in SNEARS.

In addition, all SFAs must complete the [Civil Rights Data Collection Report](#) (Form #86) for each school/site under its sponsorship. The form must reflect data as of October 15<sup>th</sup> of each year and must be maintained on file.

**SNEARS Application Packet Deadlines:** Letter to Parent and Application documents must be submitted and certified before the first day of school to participate in the School Nutrition Programs for School Year 2024-2025. Application Packets must be completed by the deadline of September 30, 2024.

**Administrative Reviews:** SFAs operating the National School Lunch Program who will receive an Administrative Review for SY 2024-2025 will be notified in late September.

**Food Safety Inspection (FSI) Report Reminder:** SFAs must report the number of health/sanitation inspections each school/site received during the prior 2023-2024 school year in SNEARS by October 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Verification Report Reminder:** The Verification link for SY2024-2025 will be live in SNEARS beginning October 1, 2024. New this year, qualifying SFAs may use an alternative sample size. Please refer to the [Alternative Sample Size Option for SY 2024 – 2025](#) for additional information.

**Direct Certification:** SFAs are reminded that effective SY 2024-2025, Medicaid data is included to directly certify eligible students for free or reduced-price meals or free milk without the household having to complete an application. Manual household extension of DC benefits does apply for Medicaid as long as one member of the household receives Medicaid as identified by the DC system in SNEARS. Please note that not all Medicaid recipients will automatically qualify for benefits because the methodology for determining income eligibility for Medicaid is different from that of determining income eligibility for free or reduced-price school meals. SFAs may also find the [Hierarchy of Eligibility Benefits](#) helpful.

**On-Site Monitoring:** Regulations require each School Food Authority, including RCCIs, to perform no less than one on-site review of the meal counting and claiming system and the readily observable general areas of review in each school by February 1, 2025. SFAs must also conduct on-site monitoring of the Afterschool Snack Program two times a year. The first review must occur during the first four weeks of operation each school year. SFAs may utilize the [National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program](#), [Community Eligibility Provision](#), [Afterschool Snack](#) and [RCCI](#)

On-Site Monitoring Forms found on the NJDA website.

**Summer EBT Reminder:** SFAs are reminded that Summer EBT file uploads are accepted weekly throughout the Summer for any new eligibility and/or address changes. Please note that newly incoming pre-school and kindergarten students do not qualify for the Summer EBT benefit in Summer 2024 and should not be included in your Summer EBT file upload. These students will qualify for Summer EBT benefits in Summer 2025. Summer EBT benefits are issued to eligible children based on their enrollment at the end of the instructional year immediately preceding each summer. (Instructional School Year = July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024, for Summer EBT 2024 benefits.)

The last day of the Summer EBT operational period was August 31, 2024. The last day for SFAs to upload any new updates to student demographic information and/or meal eligibility data is Friday, September 13, 2024.

**Calendar of Important School Nutrition Dates (Form 129):** A [calendar](#) outlining important School Nutrition Program dates and events has been posted in the *Resources* section of SNEARS to assist SFAs throughout the year.

We look forward to working with you and your foodservice departments toward a healthy and safe 2024-2025 School Year. Please direct any questions to the School Nutrition Programs Unit at 609-984-0693 or [snp@ag.nj.gov](mailto:snp@ag.nj.gov).