United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service

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SUBJECT: Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

This memorandum modifies the policy related to categorical eligibility for free meals or free milk for children who are members of a household receiving assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) or the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Program. We are modifying the policy to increase access to the child nutrition programs and to streamline the eligibility process.

Beginning in School Year 2009-2010, for direct certification with SNAP, FDPIR or TANF and applications with case numbers for these programs, all children in the family, as defined in 7 CFR 245.2, are categorically eligible for free meals. To the extent possible, the local educational agency (LEA) must extend eligibility for free meals to all children in what would be considered a family for the purposes of applying for free or reduced price meals or free milk. If the LEA does not have an application as a reference, it may be able to use school district enrollment records to determine additional children who are part of the family who were not identified through direct certification. For households submitting applications with case numbers for some, but not all, of their children, the LEA must certify all children as categorically eligible for free meals or milk. Any income information on the application is disregarded. Further, for purposes of carry-over into the new school year, categorical eligibility must, to the extent feasible, be extended to newly enrolled siblings.

This memorandum supersedes the policy provided in the January 2008 edition of the Eligibility Manual for School Meals concerning categorical eligibility. We will be updating the manual. These policies extend to the Child and Adult Care Food Program and to the Summer Food Service Program when applications are taken. Please note that these policies do not extend to other categorically eligible categories such as Head Start or children enrolled in the Migrant Education Program. State agencies should contact their regional office if they have any questions.

Original Signed

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