



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
33 West State Street 4th Floor
PO Box 334
TRENTON NJ 08625-0334

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

DOUGLAS H. FISHER
Secretary

To: County Superintendents, County Business Administrators
School Business Administrators
Charter School Leads
Non-Public School Administrators
Food Service Directors

From: Janet Hawk, Coordinator
School Nutrition Programs 

Date: November 5, 2012

Subject: Disaster Response for Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program

In light of the devastation brought by hurricane Sandy, please review the following procedures from USDA, for any schools that participate in the federally funded National School Lunch Program (NSLP):

ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE MEALS AND DISASTER BENEFITS

Children Experiencing Homelessness

Children residing in or evacuated from disaster areas may be determined homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These children are categorically (automatically) eligible for free meals in the Child Nutrition Programs. A school district's homeless coordinator makes a determination of homelessness and provides a list of all children determined homeless due to a disaster situation. The Local Education Agency (LEA) must certify these children for free meals.

In cases where a household from a designated disaster area moves in with another household, the homeless liaison may determine the displaced individuals homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The host family may include the displaced family members and any income provided to them when applying for free or reduced price meals.

Local Education Agencies that require eligibility information can receive certification of the students' homeless status from the agency that assisted with the evacuation or that is providing shelter. If the child is not residing in an emergency shelter, the institution should have an adult living with the child complete an income eligibility form indicating that the child is homeless. No further information is required to certify the child's eligibility.

Disaster Benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Children in households receiving Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) benefits are categorically eligible for free meals in the Child Nutrition Programs. Certification of these children may be accomplished through direct contact with the SNAP agency or by an application submitted by a household with a case number.

Certification by School Officials

School officials may submit applications on behalf of children they know to be homeless and therefore categorically eligible for free meals. See Part 3 of the Eligibility Manual for School Meals for additional information on this option.

Duration of Eligibility

Children certified for free or reduced price meal benefits because of a disaster situation are no longer *temporarily* approved because households are no longer required to report changes in income or household size. Their eligibility, including eligibility based on homeless status or receipt of D-SNAP benefits, remains in effect for the entire school year and up to 30 days in the next school year.

Meal Component and Meal Service

Flexibility is allowed with regard to time of meal service and use of offer versus serve. If emergency conditions exist that prevent Local Education Agencies from obtaining fluid milk, it is allowable to serve meals without milk or with an alternate form of milk, such as canned or dry milk (7 CFR 210.10(m)(2)(i); 7 CFR 225.16(f)(6); 7 CFR 226.20(e)). For the school meals programs, LEAs are allowed to serve meals that do not meet the menu planning or meal pattern requirements in disaster situations. **THE ENCLOSED DISASTER RESPONSE EXEMPTION FORM MUST BE COMPLETED IF ALTERNATE MENUS OR MILK SERVICE IS REQUIRED, INCLUDING THE PERIOD OF TIME AND REASON FOR WHICH THE ALTERATIONS ARE REQUESTED.**

Accountability and Verification Procedures; Required Reports

Due to the extended period of time many schools have been closed, the following deadlines have been extended as follows:

- 1. Reimbursement claim submission for October 2012 is extended from November 10 to November 30, 2012.**
- 2. The deadline for completing the verification process is extended from November 15 to December 7, 2012.**
- 3. The deadline for submitting the food safety inspection report in SNEARS is extended from October 31 until November 12.**

If LEAs need to reconstruct unsubmitted claims due to loss of current records, they must notify the Division. When records required for review purposes, such as paid claims, approved

applications and production records, are destroyed, LEAs should inform the Division of the circumstances and dates of the losses, and the types and approximate age of the records that were lost. LEAs that are operational, but unable to maintain normal accountability systems, including counting, claiming, and monitoring, must complete the enclosed Disaster Response Exemption form.

Feeding Students from Other School Districts

If the LEA takes in students from other school districts because of hurricane related issues, reimbursement can temporarily be claimed for those students by obtaining the Master Eligibility List (MEL) from the other schools, then adjusting the attending enrollment and claiming the meals according to the students' eligibility status. Document such procedures on the enclosed Disaster Response Exemption form.

USING USDA FOODS IN DISASTERS

USDA will replace the value of all USDA Foods removed from inventory at the local level that are used for approved disaster or emergency mass feeding programs and approved disaster household food distributions within Presidentially-declared disaster or emergency areas. However, USDA does not have the authority or the resources to replace non-USDA foods used for disaster or emergency feeding. Further details on replacement procedures will be forthcoming from the NJ Food Distribution Programs office.

PLEASE NOTE: Neither the state nor USDA is able to replace or provide reimbursement for any foods, including USDA Foods or locally purchased items, that are lost as a result of power outages or other storm damage. The LEAs must pursue such losses through their local insurance companies.

Any exemptions to the normal regulations surrounding the School Nutrition Programs as referenced in this memo must be documented by completion of the Disaster Response Exemption form included below. The memo must be signed by both the Food Service Director and the School Business Administrator (or School Directors for non-public schools). This form may be mailed to the Division at the address on this letterhead, to the attention of Arleen Ramos-Szatmary, or may be faxed to Arleen at 609-984-0878.

USDA and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture are working to provide as much assistance as possible to accommodate the needs of schools and individuals affected by hurricane Sandy. Feel free to contact this office at 609-984-0692 with any further questions or concerns.

CC: Food Service Management Companies

**State of New Jersey School Nutrition Programs
Disaster Response Exemption Form
Fax: 609-984-0878**

Local Education Agency _____

County _____ Agreement # _____

Contact Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Requesting exemption of the following regulatory requirements for the National School Lunch and or School Breakfast Programs as follows:

	<u>Specific Dates for Exemption</u>	<u>Reason for Exemption Request</u>
Serving fluid milk	_____	_____
Meal Pattern	_____	_____
(be specific of exemptions needed)	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
Offer vs Serve	_____	_____
(be specific of exemptions needed)	_____	_____
Meal Counting/Claiming	_____	_____
(be specific of exemptions needed)	_____	_____

Feeding Students from other LEAs _____

Name of other LEAs/Schools

I certify that these exemptions requested to the federal/state School Nutrition Program regulations are only as absolutely necessary for as short a period of time as possible to accommodate uncontrollable circumstances as a result of hurricane Sandy.

Signature of School Food Service Director

Date

Signature of School Business Administrator/School Director

Date