



Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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September 9, 2009

TO: Authorized Representative, Child Nutrition Programs

From: Karen Wooton, Coordinator, School Food Services Section

Subject: Extending Categorical Eligibility to Additional Children in a Household

This memorandum modifies USDA's policy relating to categorical eligibility for students receiving free meals (National School Lunch/School Breakfast Programs) or free milk (Special Milk Program) who are members of a household receiving Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance or benefits under the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) Program.

Beginning in School Year 2009-2010, if at least one student in the household is eligible for free meals based on direct certification or has an application with a Food Stamp, Temporary Assistance, or FDPIR case number, all of the students in the family are automatically eligible for free meals. To the extent possible, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must extend eligibility for free meals or free milk to all children who would be considered a family member. If a family has more than one child and only one child is listed on the direct certification list, then eligibility is extended to all children in the household. If the LEA does not have an application as a reference, it may be able to use school enrollment records to determine additional children who are part of the family not identified through the direct certification process. For households submitting applications with case numbers for some, but not all of their children, the LEA must certify all children as eligible for free meals or milk. Any income information on the application is disregarded. For purposes of carry-over into the new school year, eligibility must, to the extent feasible, be extended to newly enrolled siblings.

This memorandum supersedes the policy provided in the January 2008 addition of the Eligibility Manual for School Meals concerning categorical eligibility. Please note that this policy does not extend to other categorically eligible categories such as Head Start or children enrolled in Migrant Education Programs.

If you have questions contact our office at 573-751-3526.