


Memorandum

Date: September 21, 2023
To: School Food Authorities
From:  Marianna Chauvin, Division Director
MDE Office of Child Nutrition
Subject: State Conference Q&A 2023

The following questions were received and answered by SA staff during State Conference 2023.

- 1) **What happened to the “competitive foods” rule where students and staff cannot bring in competitive foods in the cafeteria? Districts have been cited for this in the past.**
 - a) The competitive food rule addresses foods that are ***sold*** to students, and restricts competitive food sales for an hour prior to, and for the duration of, the meal service. There is no limitation on what students bring from home, and these outside foods are not covered under the competitive food rule. The local wellness policy or student handbook can be updated to restrict outside food (e.g. soda cans must be covered; fast food bags must be replaced with non-descript brown bags), however implementation and enforcement is left to local control. Only the competitive food rule, as defined in the MDE Board Policy, will be monitored by SA staff during an Administrative Review.

- 2) **Do we have to contact MS Department of Health each year for approval to serve at a satellite site? Last year, I was told my alternative did not need a health inspection by MSDH.**
 - a) Yes, you will need something in writing from the health department every year. Even if you are exempt from food permits, they must approve your satellite plan which includes how you plan to transport and serve food safely.

- 3) **Concerning the adult meals prices, a Memo was sent out in February that is when we calculate prices for 23-24. Our handbooks are already approved based on that.**
 - a) We are aware that we are always behind on the calculation for adult meals based on the fact that we do not receive reimbursement rates or commodity rates until mid July every year. We are focused on updating the calculator as quickly as we can, but we will never

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be able to complete in enough time for August implementation. If you are a year behind, that is acceptable.

4) When managers go through Recertification in May, how long does that certification last?

- a) Certification is good for 1 year (July 1 through June 30). Managers must attend Manager Recertification every year when it is offered by the SA; and that certification will be effective for the upcoming SY.

5) If I attended the ANC conference in Denver, can I log those hours from the meetings I attended?

- a) Yes, attendance at ANC can be counted toward the annual professional development requirements for the NSLP required by federal regulation (7 CFR 210.30). Attendance at ANC cannot, however, replace or fulfill the MS State Board of Education requirements (SBE Policy 17.1) regarding accrual of hours provided by the Office of Child Nutrition. Attendees at ANC 2023 in Denver had the opportunity to earn up to 12.5 CEUs (more if you also attended pre-con workshops). A tracking grid is available in the SNA resources section of the conference app. Training can also count toward SNA's certificate program and credentialing renewal. RDs and DTRs in the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics also can earn 12.5 CPEUs, depending on specific sessions. For more information about CEUs and professional development accrual, please contact SNA. Remember, all professional credit hours should be documented and included in your professional development tracking tool which will be reviewed by the SA during an AR.

6) Sack lunches taken to classrooms, is this congregated feeding?

- a) We consider meals in the classroom (whether it is breakfast or lunch) to be congregated feeding. We will continue with this interpretation until told otherwise by USDA.

7) Does a person applying for the child nutrition director position still have to have a bachelor's degree?

- a) Please refer to State Board of Education Policy 17.1: Any newly appointed Food Service Administrator employed after July 1, 1992, shall meet the minimum qualifications for a Level II Food Service Administrator. In the event a special need arises the superintendent of the local district may request a two-year provisional certificate for an individual. In order for an individual to obtain this provisional certificate, proof must be provided that the minimum qualifications can be met within twenty-four (24) months of employment. Food Service Administrator II: a baccalaureate degree from an accredited four-year college or university including a minimum of nine (9) hours food and nutrition or food systems management, and six hours of educational administration, business, management or accounting.

8) Why do we (State of MS) not provide or work on providing universal free meals during school first, then go to providing additional EBT funds for the summer?

- a) There is currently no mechanism that would allow universal free meals. The Summer EBT program is not yet implemented and we do not know exactly how it will operate in

the State of Mississippi. Both of these issues are dictated by congressional action, not SA action.

9) This question is in regard to the “ALT” (Alternative School) designation for sites in the MARS naming convention. Our high school cafeteria serves our alternative students breakfast and lunch. Would this be an example of ALT or not?

- a) We will list all stand-alone alternative school cafeteria as “ALT” sites. For example, if you have a cafeteria at a site that serves exclusively alternative kids; there are no enrolled students, that would be an “ALT” site. If your high school serves both high school and alternative students, it would not be “ALT”.

10) Should all children with a SNAP number be on the DC list?

- a) We would expect any child with a SNAP # to be on the DC list, but there could be multiple reasons why you can't locate them. There could be reporting delays or the child could be included on your No Match file. You must provide free meal benefits if a parent provides a SNAP number on an meal application. You should try to locate that child on the DC. If you cannot, you have the option to verify them for cause.

11) Who is the contact for getting my no match DC list instead of having to match them manually?

- a) If you identify students on the “No Match” list, verify and correct the student's DOB or SSN in MSIS so that it will match on the next file. If you believe that the DOB or SSN is already correct in MSIS, this could be a MDHS error and the parent will have to contact their local MDHS/SNAP office to have the data error corrected within the MDHS data system.

12) Why does a child appear on the DC list under one name and another name when registering for school?

- a) Always look for multiple points of match with the DC list. If the name appears different, you should attempt to match based on DOB, SSN, parent name etc. Sometimes names do not match because MSDH software doesn't recognized apostrophes or account marks.

13) Suggested accounting codes for the purchase of uniforms/shoes?

- a) Uniforms and shoes can be coded to Objective Code 610.

14) With CEP, after the 4 years cycle, are the districts allowed to file for a 1 year extension?

- a) At the end of a 4 year CEP cycle, you can apply for a one year grace year for any site that have fallen below 40% ISP (but not 30% ISP). This school can continue to implement CEP for one more year, but the reimbursement will be: current ISP x 1.6= free reimbursement.

15) Can principals or teachers use a la carte purchases in the cafeteria as a form of punishment by not allowing students to purchase during meal time?

- a) You can limit extra sales. You cannot limit reimbursable meals.

- 16) Are there training requirements for short-term/long-term cafeteria subs?**
a) Part time workers must accrue 4 hours of annual training. This would include subs.
- 17) Where are the 2023-2024 meals applications? Or how do I retrieve one?**
a) The SA has already sent an email with information about the updated Prototype application for free and reduced price meals. The prototype is available on the USDA website at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/revised-prototype-application-free-reduced-price-school-meals>
- 18) Will the PowerPoints be on MDE/CN site?**
a) Yes; <https://www.mdek12.org/OCN/2023-State-Conference>
- 19) Can there be a step-by-step powerpoint added to MDE/CN site on the red book with example pages filled out for our managers to reference?**
a) Yes; resources can be found at <https://www.mdek12.org/OCN/Resources> (see NAO Part I Powerpoint). Also, remember that sample pages are available in the front of each red book.
- 20) Are there resources/training for special dietary needs available online?**
a) Yes; resources can be found at <https://www.mdek12.org/OCN/Resources>.
(See NAO Part II Powerpoint)

The ICN also has resources available online:

Food Allergies and Intolerances: <https://theicn.org/september-2022/>

Managing Food Allergies: https://theicn.org/wpfd_file/managing-food-allergies-2/

Food Safety Spotlight: Food Allergies: <https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/food-safety-spotlight-food-allergies/>

- 21) Our ISS and alternative school students do not leave the building to go to the cafeteria. Their meals are delivered. Are we required to implement OVS? Should this be a satellite unit?**
a) If your ISS/alternative students are high school, you must implement OVS at lunch. If the meals are taken from the cafeteria to an area on the same campus, it is not a satellite site.
- 22) Would time be considered for a share table? If the food is discarded within 2 hours?**
a) Yes, this is a best practice. We recommend that you consult with your MSDH Environmentalist regarding all food safety concerns.
- 23) Concerning the share table - is it possible for the cafeterias to sell the leftover items at a discount price for whomever is interested in the items? I would like to sell these leftover items to teachers, janitors, or other employees.**
a) No, all items left on the share table at the end of the service period must be discarded and cannot be sold or donated or consumed by adults.

- 24) What if janitors help in the kitchen. Will they be counted as in-kind? Can they get a tray at no cost?**
- a) Janitors cannot receive an in-kind meal unless at least part of their salary is paid with CN funds. Sites should not create a situation with their in-kind practices where the janitor comes in to take out the trash, just to get a free meal. If Janitors are not paid out of CN funds, but the district still wishes to give them a meal at no charge, the district can make arrangements to pay for the provision of those meals.
- 25) If a manager puts the recipe number in the production book, do they still have to list every item in the recipe (that does not contribute to the meal pattern) as an additional food?**
- a) If you list the recipe number (whether it is an MRS recipe number or a local recipe number); you do not have to list ingredients (cream of mushroom soup, garlic powder, etc) under additional foods. The SA reviewer will expect that you have followed the recipe and can pull the recipe if there are any questions about non-creditable ingredients.
- 26) What do I need to do if I have a manager that was hired after May after the re-certification training?**
- a) Contact April Catchings, Director of Training, regarding an emergency certificate.
- 27) Can you use a grant to help pay for an equipment if cooler/freezer cost more than the grant?**
- a) Yes. The EAG will cover the cost up to the amount awarded to each school site. The district's Child Nutrition department will have to pay for the remainder.
- 28) For field trips, can I send shelf stable vegetable juice?**
- a) Yes, but make sure you have offered a sufficient quantity for the meal pattern for the age group. The lunch meal pattern for K-8 requires $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of vegetable to be offered daily. The lunch meal pattern for 9-12 requires 1 cup of vegetables to be offered daily.
- 29) Will ICN training count for professional standards hours for the year?**
- a) Yes, maintain a copy of your certification for audit purposes.
- 30) Do the training requirements apply to employees of the food service management company?**
- a) FSMC employees are subject to annual training requirements just like every other CN employee. Directors should accrue 12 hours of annual training. Managers should accrue 10 hours of annual training. Non-managerial, full-time staff should accrue 6 hours of annual training. Part time staff should accrue 4 hours of annual training.
- 31) With the new MSIS system, are we still required to input eligibility statuses for lunch (during the month of September) as we have had to do in the past?**
- a) We will update information regarding the new MSIS system as it is released by MDE OTSS.