Miscellaneous Service Information

Equal Access for All Students

When a school offers a selection of more than one type of meal that is claimed for reimbursement or when it offers a variety of foods and fluid milk for choice within the meal requirements, the school must offer all children the same selection regardless of whether the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, or pay the full price for meals set by the school. If certain items are not made available to all children, including those receiving free or reduced-price meals, those items may not be counted toward reimbursable meals.

IMPORTANT POINT

Meals served on an all-cash line may never be claimed for reimbursement, even though the same items are offered on another serving line. If certain lines are not made available to all children, including those receiving free or reduced price meals, meals served on those lines may not be claimed.

When planning for special functions, parties, field trips, etc., the foodservice department should be involved in the process to ensure that students are not denied meals, that free and reduced-price students are not overtly identified, and that meals claimed for reimbursement meet requirements. For instance, when field trips are planned, the foodservice department can make sack lunches for those students who request one. This would include free, reduced-price and paid student requests. Request forms used for field trips **must not** include eligibility status. By allowing all students to request a lunch if desired, overt identification is prevented.

Meal Times

Breakfast and Lunch

Regular meal times specified in regulations for the National School Lunch Program have been identified as 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Breakfast hours would be identified as meal service prior to 10 a.m. in most circumstances. Districts are encouraged to allow students to eat breakfast when they are late arriving at school. However, this is not a requirement.

Evening Hours

Some schools have requested alternative feeding times. The following information provides guidance about meal times other than the regular 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and that reimbursable lunches would normally need to be served between these hours. It is further specified that evening meals cannot be considered lunch and that such meals should not be reimbursed. However, exemptions may be allowed on a case-by-case basis if they are approved by the CDE OSN, but under no circumstances can evening meals served to students in adult education courses or in delayed diploma programs be considered reimbursable. It is important to determine that schools are serving traditional high school students at a non-traditional time.

Contact CDE OSN for a meal time exemption application. Requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and must be updated annually.

Guidance for Year-Round Schools

USDA has determined that school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program as part of their year-round program may provide meals through these programs to children who are not in school (off track) because of school breaks or vacations <u>if the students are engaged in school-sponsored educational activities</u>. Year-round schools may claim reimbursement for eligible meals through the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, but they must ensure that students are enrolled in school in an educational unit and that systems are in place to identify off-track children from other school children.

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICE INFORMATION

Off-Site Meal Consumption

National School Lunch Program authorizing legislation and program regulations clearly intend that meals reimbursed under the programs are to be served and consumed on school or school-related premises. Therefore, meals taken off-site are not reimbursable. This would include meals given to children to eat on the bus, take home with them due to early dismissal, etc. Meals consumed on school-sponsored, supervised field trips may be reimbursed since the meals are prepared by the school foodservice and are served and consumed as part of a school-related function. Meals served during such field trips should be subject to especially stringent sanitary and precautionary measures to avoid food contamination and spoilage.

Kindergarten and Prekindergarten Programs

The National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program may be operated in schools of high school grade and under. This means that students attending kindergarten and prekindergarten programs are eligible to participate in the lunch and breakfast programs. Please refer to the School Lunch Requirements, Section 12, when planning meals for these age groups. At the discretion of the school district, students attending school on a half-day basis may participate in the lunch and breakfast programs in operation.

A La Carte Service

If a school provides an a la carte service and has implemented offer versus serve, any combination of foods that would comprise the minimum required food items of the planned school meal may be sold at the unit price for school breakfast or lunch. The meal may be claimed for reimbursement as long as all required food items are made available to each student for lunch and breakfast. Also, in this case, a la carte items would have to be made available to children eligible for free and reduced-price meals. If children choose fewer than the required number of food items, a la carte prices should be charged and no reimbursement claimed. Also, if additional foods not offered as part of the school meal are selected, a la carte prices should be charged for those items. A school or district which offers larger portions of various a la carte items that may be combined to qualify as reimbursable meals and are priced differently than the main line(s) are required to submit a schedule/menu of the combos and the unit price. See page 5.1 for additional guidance on al la carte meal pricing.

A La Carte Service Provided by a Commercial Food Establishment

A school or school district is prohibited by federal regulations from contracting with a foodservice management company (or commercial enterprise) to operate an a la carte foodservice unless the company agrees to offer free, reduced-price and paid meals to all eligible children. This rule applies regardless of whether the commercial foodservice is operated in the cafeteria or in other campus locations.



- . Q: Can a la carte items be grouped and totaled to equal the price charged for a full-price lunch or breakfast and claimed for reimbursement, such as 5 juices at 20 cents = \$1.00 (the price of the lunch) or 3 milks at 25 cents = 75 cents (the price of the breakfast)?
 - A: No. Only when the required food items are offered and the required number of food items are selected by the student can a reimbursable meal be claimed.
- 2. Q: May salads that are priced per ounce be claimed for reimbursement?
 - A: No. The meal must be priced as a unit and all students must be allowed to choose the meal at the unit price.

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICE INFORMATION

Self-Serve/Theme Bars

To promote good nutrition and to provide an alternate menu choice for students, salad and other types of self-serve/theme bars have been added to the services available in many school cafeterias.

The self-serve/theme bar may be priced on an a la carte basis or as a reimbursable meal. One advantage of offering it as a reimbursable meal is that students receiving all levels of benefits (free, reduced price and paid) have access to the additional service.

The following must be accomplished to claim reimbursement for meals selected from a self-serve bar:

- All menu items of the reimbursable lunch must be offered.
- The meal must be priced as a unit.
- The self-serve/theme bar must be available to students receiving all levels of benefits (paid, free and reduced price).
- The menu items must be taken in the required amounts. If the school has offer versus serve, the minimum required number of menu items must be taken.
- Cashiers must be trained to recognize a reimbursable meal and the meal must be counted at the pointof-service.
- Food production records must be maintained on the self-serve/theme bar.

Commercially Prepared Ready-to-Eat Foods

Meat- and Poultry-topped Pizza

FSIS's final rule exempting meat- or poultry-topped pizzas from federal meat inspection requirements was published on August 3, 1992, and effective upon publication.

The principal provisions of the rule follow:

- Meat or poultry products must have been previously inspected and passed in a cooked or cured ready-to-eat form.
- Pizzas must be served in public or private non-profit institutions.
- Pizzas must be ready-to-eat with no further cooking or preparation needed.
- Pizzas must be transported directly to the receiving institution by employees of the preparing firm, receiving institution or foodservice management company employed by the receiving institution.
- Firms claiming the exemption must comply with specific provisions of the FDA's 1976 *Food Service Sanitation Manual* that have been incorporated by reference into the rule. In addition, the rule establishes specific requirements for the manual or machine cleaning of utensils and equipment.
- FSIS may withdraw or modify the exemption for any firm if necessary to ensure food safety and public health. The rule establishes due process procedures for taking such actions.
- Firms claiming the exemption are now free to sell fresh meat- or poultry-topped pizzas to school food authorities participating in the National School Lunch Program.
- Under the exemption, state and local health inspection programs have primary responsibility for sanitation. FSIS also reserves the right to conduct any inspections it deems appropriate.