USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service

Mountain Plains Region

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MAY 28 2003

Reply to Attn of: CACFP-703
SFSP-482
SP-03-16

Subject: Effects of Bussing on Area Eligibility in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and the National School Lunch Program

To: STATE AGENCY DIRECTORS (Special Nutrition Programs) - Colorado ED, Colorado DPH, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri ED, Missouri DHSS, Montana OPI, Montana DPHHS, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming

We have been made aware of potential barriers to program participation where school children, in public school systems, are being assigned (by way of bussing) to a school outside the attendance area of their neighborhood school. For purposes of this memorandum, we will refer to this practice as "bussing".

Bussing can have the effect of causing a site, located in an area in which poor economic conditions exist, to be designated as ineligible based on enrollment data which has been adjusted to reflect student reassignments.

This situation may occur in any program in which site eligibility is based on the percentage of children eligible for free and reduced-price meals in the National School Lunch Program. The effect of bussing is especially significant to sites applying to participate in the Summer Food Service Program, in At-risk Afterschool programs participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and in the snack service in afterschool care programs under the National School Lunch Program. This is because meal service sites for these situations are generally associated with the neighborhood school of the children, rather than where children attend school.

To address this issue, we have determined that, in situations where public schools routinely bus children from their neighborhood school to other schools, site eligibility may be based on one of two methods. The Program sponsor may determine eligibility based on the enrollment/attendance data obtained for:

- the school the children attend and are bussed (this represents currently established policy), or
- the school the children would have attended were it not for the school's bussing policy (the neighborhood school where the children live).

Program sponsors may determine a site to be area eligible in situations as described above only if the school food authority is able to document the percentage of children eligible for free and reduced-price meals at each school, before and after students are reassigned. The same method of determining site eligibility must be used for all sites participating under that Program sponsor to avoid duplicate counting.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at (303) 844-0355.

Darlene Sanchez

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