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DATE: September 20, 2012  
TO: Authorized Representatives, National School Lunch Program  
FROM: Bev Benes, PhD, RD, Director, Nutrition Services *Bev Benes*  
SUBJECT: Getting Started on the Menu Certification Process

*The following memo and enclosure are also being sent to the SFA's food service director/manager. If other site managers will be involved with certification, copies of the memo/enclosure will need to be made for them.*

With the passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, USDA's new meal pattern requirements went into effect July 1, 2012. Part of the law requires SFAs (School Food Authorities) to submit one week of menus to Nutrition Services for review. SFAs who demonstrate compliance with the new meal pattern will be certified by Nutrition Services. This means that in addition to the regular reimbursement currently received, certified SFAs will receive an additional six cents in reimbursement for each student lunch served.

Certification is a requirement of participating in the School Meals Program. The additional performance-based reimbursement applies to menus served on or after October 1, 2012. SFAs are encouraged to certify their menus this school year; however, if an SFA chooses not to apply for the additional reimbursement, the new meal pattern requirements must still be met. SFAs that do not certify this year will be required to demonstrate compliance with the meal pattern requirements in effect at that time menus are submitted for review.

#### **Certification Process – An Overview**

- SFAs must submit certification documentation online to NDE Nutrition Services. The week of menus submitted must reflect meal service in the current or preceding calendar month. For example, if documentation is submitted to Nutrition Services in December, the records must reflect a week of menus served in December or November.
- Nutrition Services will have up to 60 days to make a certification determination once the SFA has submitted a complete package of all required documents for review.
- SFAs will receive the additional reimbursement for each lunch served beginning the first day of the month in which the certified menus are served. For example, if menus for the week of December 10-14, 2012 are certified in February of 2013, the SFA will be retroactively reimbursed six cents for each lunch served on or after December 1, 2012.
- Nutrition Services will be conducting on-site validation reviews of 25 percent of the certified SFAs in SY 2012-13. The purpose of this review is to ensure continued compliance with the new meal pattern requirements. We will also observe meal service for each distinct menu served by the SFA.
- SFAs must only be certified once; after that, as new requirements are phased in, SFAs must annually attest to being in compliance with the updated meal pattern through SY 2014-15.

*To lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.*

- Ongoing compliance with USDA's meal pattern requirements will be monitored during Administrative Reviews (previously called Coordinated Reviews) beginning in SY 2013-14.

### **SFA Documents to Submit for Certification**

The SFA must submit the following documentation to Nutrition Services for review:

- **Menu:** A monthly calendar of planned lunch and breakfast (if applicable) menus which includes the one week of menus to be reviewed is suggested. The week of menus must reflect the different menus the SFA serves. A week means a traditional school week, not to include holidays. The majority of SFAs in Nebraska will submit a 5-day menu; however some SFAs will submit a 4-day menu. Residential Child Care Institutions will submit a 7-day menu. Production Records are not to be submitted.
- **Certification Worksheets:** Certification worksheets must be submitted for each grade group the SFA serves (K-5, 6-8 or K-8, 9-12); a separate worksheet must be submitted for each distinct menu offered within the SFA. USDA defines a menu as all of the reimbursable meals offered within a school cafeteria. For example, if a SFA has two schools and each school plans different menus, the SFA will need to complete certification worksheets for each school. The certification worksheet shows menu items, portion sizes, how the item contributes to the meal pattern and quantities prepared. One part of the worksheet involves completing a simplified nutrient assessment (recommended option) for lunch only or the SFA can submit a full nutrient analysis using a USDA approved software program for each menu.
- **Attestation Statement:** The SFA's Authorized Representative certifies online that the documents submitted are representative of the on-going meal service within the SFA and that the minimum required quantities for all meal components are available to all students.

### **What Can SFAs Do Now?**

For SFA directors/managers who have selected a week of menus to submit, they can begin working on the certification worksheets. All SFA menus must meet the new requirements; this includes meeting the weekly vegetable sub-group requirements, documenting that half of all grains offered are whole grain and assuring that daily minimums and weekly maximums are met for the meat/meat alternate and grain components.

Organization is a key component to completing the certification worksheets. The SFA's food service director/manager needs to collect the standardized recipes, Nutrition Fact labels, Child Nutrition labels, etc. for the week of menus being submitted up front before starting the worksheets. Nutrition Services has developed online training videos and instructions accompany each section of the certification worksheet.

All information regarding certification can be found at the following address:

<http://www.education.ne.gov/ns/forms/nslpforms/Certification/Certification.html>

As certification worksheets are completed, remember to save these files as all certification documentation will be submitted electronically. Nutrition Services will notify SFAs at a later date with instructions on how to upload the files into the Child Nutrition Programs system.

Enclosed is the current list of processed USDA donated foods for 2012-13. The nutrition fact information reflects products currently being distributed in Nebraska. This will be a valuable resource when completing the certification worksheets.

If you have any questions, please contact Nutrition Services at 800-731-2233.

Enclosure: Processed USDA Donated Foods for 2012-13