

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs

SURVIVAL GUIDE

This section is intended to provide focused information on issues related to the administration of School Nutrition Programs. The information may be useful for new authorized representatives and record keepers and is organized into the following sections:

- 1) General Information
- 2) Getting Started/Agreements
- 3) Understanding Basic Foodservice Requirements
- 4) Free and Reduced-Price Meal Eligibility and Verification
- 5) Claiming Reimbursement/State Matching Funds
- 6) Ordering Commodities
- 7) Other Reporting and Recordkeeping
- 8) Training and Professional Development

Additional information regarding these topics is provided in the *Administrative Manual for School Foodservice*, which is referenced frequently throughout this Guide.

General Information

The United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service, is the federal agency which has oversight and administrative responsibility for child nutrition and food distribution programs funded by the federal government. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs (State Agency), is the authorized agency responsible for the statewide administration of the programs. The State Agency has a direct relationship with the USDA Mountain Plains Regional Office in Denver, CO, and ultimately the USDA Headquarters offices in Washington, D.C. Currently, eight (8) separate USDA programs, plus additional grants and initiatives are administered by the State Agency. The Child Nutrition and Food Distribution web site provides additional program information: www.dpi.state.nd.us/child

The State Agency is responsible for employing adequate staff to oversee and administer the programs. Staff members are generally located at the Wells Fargo bank building, 1050 East Interstate Avenue in Bismarck, but some may work out of a regional office or their home. The State Agency has developed a strategic plan, which is under continual review and revision.

The State Agency prepares a biennial budget for both administrative and grant funds. Administrative funds are those which are required for state level operations. Grant funds are those which flow through to sponsors. The budget is included in the overall budget of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, and approved by the State Legislature.

The State Agency manages the USDA programs on the Food and Nutrition Programs (FNP) system, an Internet based application. With the FNP system, most program business functions are performed over the Internet. Local nutrition programs complete and update their annual application and monthly claims for reimbursement over the FNP system.

Sponsors must adhere to the [General Requirements for Federal Programs](#) (NDDPI,

February 2005), which is referenced throughout the manual.

Getting Started/Agreements

It is recommended that sponsors create a set of files for each school year. The files can be organized in the following categories:

- 1) Agreements, Free and Reduced-Price Policy Statement and Attachments
- 2) Applications for free and reduced-price meals, master list of eligible students
- 3) Newsletters and other communication from state agency
- 4) Invoices, receipts, billings, and ledger
- 5) Meal count data to support claims filed. If claim is not filed on FNP system, a copy of claim forms filed.

Locate the Program Agreement (SFN 5908), Free and Reduced-Price Policy Statement (SFN 9184/9185) and Attachments. These documents, along with the Sponsor and Site applications, which are located on the FNP system, constitute your agreement with the State Agency.

The Program Agreement is permanent and must be pulled forward to current year. This agreement covers all school nutrition and commodity programs. It is a legally binding agreement. Review the terms carefully.

The Sponsor and Site applications reflect current year operations of the program, and are updated annually in the summer. Several data fields on the Sponsor and Site applications are tied to various edit checks on the Claim for Reimbursement. It is important to update the Sponsor and Site applications on the FNP system whenever program changes occur.

The Free and Reduced-Price Policy Statement outlines all of the requirements for approval and verification of income eligibility applications and is considered permanent until changes are initiated at the state or local level. The elements to the policy statement are 1) the name of the individual designated to make eligibility determinations, 2) the name of the hearing official, 3) an assurance that the sponsor will abide by established hearing procedures and nondiscrimination practices, 4) the procedures to accept applications for free and reduced-price benefits.

Review all documents. If they cannot be located, contact the State Agency and duplicate copies will be sent.

Understanding Basic Foodservice Requirements

The USDA regulations outline basic requirements for [traditional](#) or [enhanced lunch](#) and [traditional](#) or [enhanced breakfast](#). Various menu-planning options may be used to plan meals that meet the requirements. Review [Section B.2\(b\)](#) of the Administrative Manual for a complete description of these options. Menus must be planned to meet the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGAs) and various [nutrient standards](#). Menu and food production records must be maintained for all meals claimed for reimbursement.

The regulations require that students and parents be involved in the foodservice program. The sponsor may involve these individuals in an advisory committee, taste-testing panel, or other group.

The foodservice department must adhere to state and local health and food safety requirements. These requirements are outlined in the manual, [North Dakota Requirements for Food Establishments](#).

The lead worker of each sponsor food preparation/service site must undergo initial and continuing training regarding the safe handling, preparation, and service of food. This comprehensive 10-hour course is important to all foodservice employees. The [Pathways to a Quality School Foodservice](#) sanitation and safety course meets this training requirement. Contact the State Agency for a list of other approved Sanitation courses. See Section [E.3\(a\)](#) of the manual for more information on the Pathways to Quality School Foodservice training series

Free and Reduced-Price Eligibility and Verification

Establishing free and reduced-price meal eligibility and completing verification are two of the most important financial/record keeping functions in the foodservice program. This information is a deciding factor in the amount of federal reimbursement received by a sponsor. Chapter D of the manual provides the necessary details. Sponsors must ensure that there is documentation of direct certification, an application or Meal Benefit Notice on file for meals served to students claimed in the free or reduced-price categories. This is an area closely reviewed by state agency staff members under federal monitoring guidelines.

The State Agency strives to keep paperwork to a minimum. Methods to streamline and reduce local reporting burden are continually explored. Most [program forms](#) are available on the DPI web-site as PDF files.

Claiming Reimbursement/ State Matching Funds

Claims for reimbursement are filed over the FNP system. A separate claim is filed for each site.

Sponsors are strongly encouraged to submit their claims for reimbursement over the FNP system by the 10th of the month following the claim month to expedite payment. The sponsor may adjust claims, if necessary. However, certain guidelines and restrictions apply. See Section [C.7](#) of the manual.

There are a series of automated edit checks built into the claim. Many of these edits are tied to information on the Sponsor and Site applications. For this reason, it is very important to maintain accurate, updated information about local program operations on the FNP system.

The State Agency is required to provide matching payments to sponsors participating in the NSLP. The matching formula is defined in the regulations. The State Agency uses the state match to pay all USDA Commodity warehousing and transportation fees sponsors incur each month. The balance of the state match due to the sponsor is paid out in June. The payment is based on the sponsor's prorated share of the state appropriation, based on participation in the NSLP. The State Agency may, when necessary, use other state revenues appropriated or used specifically for program purposes to meet the matching requirement.

Ordering Commodities

USDA donated foods (commodities) are offered to sponsors through a monthly commodity preference survey process. Sponsor allocation is based on its Planned Assistance Level (PAL). The PAL is determined by the sponsor's average daily participation. Processed commodities are also available on the preference surveys with processing charges due to the company or NDDPI. See [Section B.2\(c\)](#) for further information. A [FNP Food Distribution User Manual](#) is available on the Child Nutrition web site.

Commodities are shipped to the state by the USDA, and stored at a central warehouse. The State Agency enters contracts for state level warehousing and transportation services to sponsors. These contracts are entered into on behalf of sponsors, and all efforts are made to provide the best, most cost-effective service.

Other Reporting and Recordkeeping

The State Agency routinely requests additional reports and information from sponsors.

The State Agency conducts occasional surveys to receive input on policy matters, training programs, and other issues. Sponsors are encouraged to provide input.

All program records must be retained for three fiscal years, plus the current year unless there are outstanding audit or review issues. In this case, the records must be retained until the issues are resolved.

Training and Professional Development

The training and professional development of school foodservice and administrative personnel is a major function of the State Agency. Considerable resources are dedicated to training.

The State Agency offers continual training opportunities. Notices of upcoming training are sent out routinely. The State Agency also publishes monthly administrative newsletters which provide information on regulatory requirements, policy issues, technical assistance, ideas and other information. *Directions* newsletter is published 5 times per year and sent to lead food service workers at each site. Sponsors are encouraged to utilize these newsletters, and make them readily available to staff members involved in the program.

A website is available to provide interactive online relationships with customers and stakeholders. The [child nutrition website](#) provides valuable program information to all customers.