Good morning! The following are School Nutrition Program items of interest for Sept. 8, 2016:

- **School Nutrition Programs Application Available for School Year 2016-2017 in Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System (CRRS):** All school food authorities (SFA) submitting an August claim, should complete the School Nutrition Programs application in CRRS by Friday, Sept. 30.
  - After School Care Snack Program, Site Application Section: There are technical issues with the software update which affect the After School Care Snack Program (ASCSP) section of the site application. If you participate in the ASCSP, the office understands the critical need of this section of the site application and approval of the 2017 CRRS School Nutrition Programs application packet. We are working to resolve issues and appreciate your patience during this process.
  - **Certificate of Authority (COA):** New users to the CRRS must complete a COA form and email it to your assigned program specialist.
  - Direct Certification: As a reminder, all SFAs that collect free and reduced student meal applications must complete the direct certification process. To access the direct certification software, log into the CRRS and click Applications. Then, click **Direct Certification/Direct Verification**.
  - **CRRS Application Recorded Webinar:** Our office encourages new users to view the recorded application instruction webinar prior to completing the School Nutrition Program application in CRRS.

- **Ensuring Year-long Eligibility in the School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs:** USDA policy memo SP 51-2016, published August 5, encourages local educational agencies (LEA) to accept eligibility determinations from a transferring student’s former LEA to minimize disruptions in meal benefits for low-income students and avoid student debt resulting from unpaid meal charges. While most students will change schools at least once between kindergarten and grade 12, data from the US Department of Education show that low-income students change schools more often than their peers. School changes can be disruptive to learning, but ensuring that students do not have a break in their access to free and reduced-price meals can help ensure students and families make a successful transition.

- **Ohio Farm to School:** The September 2016 Newsletter includes updates on regional farm to school conferences, farm to school month celebration ideas and upcoming USDA Farm to School grants.

**Grant Opportunities**

**School Breakfast Grant Opportunity:** The Ohio Department of Education Office for Child Nutrition has launched a school breakfast program grant to support school breakfast program development and expansion. Grant funds may be used for equipment or supplies such as milk coolers, hot and cold cabinets, insulated bags, carts, kiosks, garbage bags, trash cans, wireless point of sale machines, etc.), nutrition education materials, advertising materials to promote program, and/or giveaways for student participation and school-level staff breakfast program support. There is no minimum or maximum requested amount. School food authorities may apply for multiple buildings if applicable. Application deadline is Saturday, Oct. 15.

**Team Nutrition Grant Opportunity:** The Ohio Department of Education Office for Child Nutrition is seeking Requests for Proposals (RFP) from Ohio Team Nutrition schools to apply for Team Nutrition Buckeye Healthy Schools sub-grants. Selected schools will receive up to $1,000 to market an existing or newly developed entrée through taste testing and smarter lunchroom strategies. Proposals deadline is Friday, Sept. 8.
Training Opportunities:

Basic Training Dates and Locations: The school meal program basic training course reviews the school meal program regulations and requirements. Intended for persons new to school meal programs, the course covers free and reduced meal eligibility process, reimbursable meal planning, counting and claiming meals and much more. The course is held at the State Library of Ohio, 274 E. First Avenue, Columbus, 43201, on the dates listed below. Registration begins at 9 a.m. and the course runs from 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. To register, please visit the CRRS training registration page.

- September 12
- October 4
- December 6
- February 7
- April 4
- June 6

Pre-Administrative Review Workshop: This workshop prepares school food professionals for the administrative review process, details process, and discusses required documentation. Workshop sessions are scheduled to be held at the State Library of Ohio, 274 E. First Avenue, Columbus, 43201. Registration begins at 9 a.m. and courses run from 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Additional regional workshop dates and locations will be added and announced through this weekly email starting in August. To register, please visit the CRRS training registration page.

- October 5*
- November 9
- December 7*

Note: Dates with an asterisk (*) indicate workshops are an additional learning course to support basic training. While basic training is not a pre-requisite to the workshop, new school food service professionals may find participation in the basic training workshop helpful prior to attending a pre-administrative review workshop.

Professional Standards Education Hours Feature Publication:

The office received approval from USDA to offer education credits toward the Professional Standards requirements through this weekly email. Below is this week’s highlight publication. To count the education credits, the reader will need to keep an electronic or printed copy of the email with the questions answered. The office will publish the answers in next week’s email and will highlight another policy memo or guidance document. This process will repeat in each weekly email throughout the year. Each weekly email review will count as 30 minutes toward the professional standards requirements.

This week’s featured document is USDA policy memo SP 46-2016 Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies published July 8. Click here for the document. The professional standards topic code is 3300 Financial Management, 3350 Pricing.

The purpose of this memorandum is to address the need for school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to institute and clearly communicate a meal charge policy, which would include, if applicable, the availability of alternate meals. Because all students in participating schools may receive reimbursable school meals, all SFAs must have a policy in place for children who are participating at the reduced price or paid rate, but either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of
the meal at the time of service. Such a policy ensures that school food service professionals, school administrators, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations in these situations.

FNS has determined that due to variations in state and local school environments and policy, meal charge and alternate meal policies should continue to be made at the State or local level. In Ohio, charge policy is developed and implemented at the local level. Reiterating the memo, each school food authority on the school meal program with meal pricing (i.e. the school collects money from students for paid and reduced meals) must have a written meal charge policy. The policy may vary for elementary, middle, and high schools.

It is important that meal charge and alternate meal policies are clearly communicated to school administrators, school food service professionals, families, and students. Stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels emphasized that developing and communicating meal charge policies prevents confusion for students and families and promotes effective financial management of the school meal programs.

Whether developed at the state or SFA-level, SFAs must ensure that the policy is provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households that transfer to the school during the school year. Additionally, SFAs are encouraged to include the policy in student handbooks and/or in online portals households use to access student accounts. SFAs are encouraged to use multiple methods to disseminate the policy. The written policy also could be provided again to the household through mail or email the first time the policy is applied to a specific student.

SFAs also must provide the meal charge policy to all school or SFA-level staff responsible for policy enforcement. This includes school food service professionals responsible for collecting payment for meals at the point of service, staff involved in notifying families of low or negative balances, and staff involved in enforcing any other aspects of the meal charge policy. School social workers, school nurses, the homeless liaison, and other staff members that may assist students in need also should be informed of the policy. FNS also encourages SFAs to provide information about the policy to principals, assistant principals, and other administrators to ensure they are familiar with and supportive of the policy.

In lieu of answering questions, the SFA professional must ensure the SFA has a clearly written charge policy and the charge policy is communicated in a transparent manner as described in the policy memo.

The following questions and answers are from the email sent on Sept. 1, which discussed USDA publication *Eligibility Manual for School Meals*, updated in August 2016.

Question 1: True or False, if a local educational agency (LEA) uses an electronic system (online application) for households to enter and submit their student meal application, the school does not need to make available paper applications. True or False?
False. Per page 68 of the publication, a household must have an opportunity to complete a paper application if it chooses not to complete the application online.

Question 2: True or False, a household may be approved for free meal benefits by providing a Medicaid number. True or False?
False. Per page 12, Medicaid is not an approved assistance program that qualifies households for free meals. The currently approved assistance programs are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, also known in Ohio as Ohio Works First (OWF)) and a program not applicable in Ohio called the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

Question 3: True or False, LEAs may establish the date of submission of an application as the effective date of eligibility, rather than the date the official approves it. This flexibility applies only to complete applications containing all required information at the time of submission. True or False?
True. Per page 43, LEAs may establish the date of submission of an application as the effective date of eligibility, rather than the date the official approves it. This flexibility applies only to complete applications containing all required information at the time of submission.
Question 4: True or False, when joint custody has been awarded and the child physically changes residence, the child is considered part of the household where the child resides. If both guardians apply for benefits for the child, in the same LEA, but the eligibility status is different, the greater benefit level is used.
True. Refer to page 20 of the publication for further details.

Question 5: True or False, in cases where the child is living with one parent, relative or friend, the child is not considered to be a member of the household with whom the child resides.
It depends. Per page 20, the child is generally considered a member of the household of which the child resides. Special cases detailed on page 21 include foster children placed by the court in a family member’s household or children declared homeless but living with a friend.

Question 6: True or False, if a discrepancy is found in a submitted application, the determining official should:
- Seek clarification about the information provided in order to make a determination in a timely manner;
- Deny the application with an explanation that incomplete information was provided; or
- Approve the application and verify for cause.
True. Per page 82, LEAs have an obligation to follow up on questionable and incomplete information when reviewing applications submitted for free and reduced-price meals or free milk.

Question 7: True or False, a child may not be considered a foster child if placed with relatives even if the placement is made by the state or local foster care system or courts.
False. Per page 21, foster children are court or state agency placed in a household and could be a family member household.

Question 8: True or False, a foreign exchange student is not considered to be a member of the household in which the student resides, i.e., the host household and is considered a household of one person.
False. Refer to page 21 of the publication for additional details.

Question 9: True or False, a child who is 18 years old can sign their own household application even if they are living with their parents or other adult household members.
False. Per page 21, a child living alone or as a separate economic unit is considered to be a household of one. Age of the child is immaterial to this determination. If an emancipated child lives alone as a household of one, or as a member of a household with no adult household members, the emancipated child must sign the application. No portion of the social security number is required on the application of an emancipated child.

Question 10: True or False, because of the year-long duration of eligibility, households are not required to report changes in income, household size, or their participation in a program that impacts their child's eligibility status. Households may voluntarily report a change. If a change is reported that will increase benefits, the LEA must put that change into effect. However, if the change will decrease benefits (from free to reduced price) or terminate benefits (from free or reduced price to paid), the LEA must explain to the household that the change does not have to go into effect unless the household wants the change made.
True. Refer to page 45 of the publication for additional details.