



**Food and Nutrition Service
Memorandums on Homeless, Runaway, and Migrant Students**

This document contains the following current Food and Nutrition Service memorandums on eligibility of homeless, runaway, and migrant students for free school meals.

Date	Title of Memo	Subject(s)
May 2, 2008	<u>Identification of Migrant Students</u>	Process for migrant students to be identified by Regional Migrant Coordinators
September 24, 2007	<u>School Meal Services for Homeless Students at Private Schools</u>	Identifying homeless students at nonpublic schools for meal benefits.
October 27, 2004	<u>Meal Approval for Homeless, Runaway, and Migrant Students</u>	Documentation of homeless, runaway or migrant status pending confirmation from the homeless education liaison or migrant coordinator.
August 23, 2004	<u>Categorical Eligibility for Migrant Children</u>	Eligibility for migrant students; Coordination with Migrant Education Program.
July 29, 2004	<u>Meal Benefits for Refugee Students Based on Homeless Status</u>	Use of homeless status to establish meal benefits for refugee students.
June 14, 2002	<u>Eligibility and Documentation of Homeless Children for School Nutrition Programs</u>	Expanded definition of "homeless": Documentation by the homeless education liaison or shelter director.



To: Sponsors of School Nutrition Programs
From: Joseph Lee, Policy Coordinator
MDE – Food and Nutrition Service
Date: May 2, 2008
Subject: Identification of Migrant Students

This information applies to School Nutrition Programs at public schools.

The April 29, 2008 MARSS Memorandum has an article on “Migrant Student Flag” that describes a new process this spring for identifying migrant students at school districts. In addition to identifying migrant status for MARSS records, this process will assist the school food service in providing free meal benefits to migrant students.

The new process has Migrant Regional Recruiters who are being hired to determine which students in each region qualify as migrants under federal criteria. If a district has at least one migrant student, the MARSS coordinator will receive a list of migrant students at the district (“Migrant Student Information Form” or “MSIF”).

The article mentions that the MARSS coordinator should also provide the list of migrant students to the school food service:

“Each of the students on the MSIF list from Tri-Valley Opportunity Council who are enrolled in the district should be marked as migrants on the MARSS file and as eligible for the free meal program (Economic Status 2). The district does not need to solicit an “Application for Educational Benefits” for these students. The MSIF list of students should be provided to the district’s Food Service staff so that they have a current list of students eligible for the free meal program.”

To view the complete article on “Migrant Student Flag,” [view “MARSS Memo – Issue 8.01.”](#)

If you have questions about approving migrant students for free school meals, contact MDE Food and Nutrition Service at 651-582-8526, 800-366-8922, or email to mde.fns@state.mn.us. If you have questions about the MARSS procedures for identifying migrant students, contact your district MARSS coordinator.



United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

Midwest Region

MW S&CNP: SA 09-3

September 24, 2007

School Meal Service to Homeless Students at Private Schools

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs

This is in response to questions we received from the Minnesota Department of Education and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction on whether private schools may serve free meals to homeless students using documentation provided by a public school homeless liaison or the State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth. The issue arose after recent flooding in sections of each of these states that were later designated disaster areas.

A January 2002 amendment to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act required each school district to designate a local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths, and to accept documentation from this liaison as support for free meal benefits. The McKinney-Vento Act covers only public schools. Therefore, under this Act, public school liaisons are not required to service private schools. This does not mean, however, that public school liaisons or the State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth may not share documentation with private schools if they choose to, or that private schools may not use shared documentation to support serving free meals to homeless and/or runaway youths. Private schools may also use documentation obtained from shelter directors for this purpose. Documentation to substantiate free meal eligibility is defined in Policy Memoranda #02-21 and #04-33.

While there is no policy requiring private schools to establish a homeless and/or runaway liaison, they are encouraged to do so (for example the school principal), for school meal programs purposes.

This supersedes question number 2 (but not question number 1) in the FY 2002 third quarter Q&A issued by our office on October 1, 2002. If you have any questions, please contact our office.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Whitmore".

For
ELVIRA JARKA
Regional Director
Special Nutrition Programs



DATE: October 27, 2004

TO: Sponsors of School Nutrition Programs

FROM: Linda Rosenbaum-Grubbs, Supervisor
Food and Nutrition Service

SUBJECT: Meal Approval for Homeless, Runaway, and Migrant Students

Students who have been documented to be homeless, runaway, or migrant are eligible for free school meals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has clarified these policies to recognize that there can be delays, of up to 90 days, for schools to receive information from homeless or migrant coordinators about a child's status as runaway, homeless or migrant.

In a situation where information is delayed, the school should determine who best knows the child's situation and have that person indicate that a child is homeless, runaway or migrant on an Application for Educational Benefits, or establish a list indicating which children are migrants, for example. The school's determining official must base his or her decision on concrete information that will support such a determination.

Once a school official establishes a child's eligibility as homeless, runaway or migrant, that eligibility remains in effect for the entire school year, provided that the child was correctly certified. If the child's status is not confirmed by subsequent information from the homeless or migrant coordinator, the school year eligibility is no longer valid. In that situation, the school must advise the household of termination of meal benefits based on homeless/runaway/migrant status and that the household may reapply for benefits.

Please share this information with your local coordinator for homeless and migrant students. If you have any question about this information, please contact Food and Nutrition Service - Policy Team at 651-582-8526, 800-366-8922, or email to mde.fns@state.mn.us.



DATE: August 23, 2004
TO: Sponsors of School Nutrition Programs
FROM: Linda Rosenbaum-Grubbs, Supervisor, Food & Nutrition Service
SUBJECT: Categorical Eligibility for Migrant Children

This message includes:

- USDA policy on school meal categorical eligibility for migrant children
- Information about coordination between school food service and the Migrant Education Program (MEP) at the local level.

Categorical Eligibility for Migrant Children

The recent federal reauthorization law for USDA Child Nutrition Programs provided for categorical eligibility for free school meals to migrant children, effective starting school year 2004-05. Eligible children are those who have been certified as migrant children under the Migrant Education Program (MEP) of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). For each migrant child, the school district will have completed a "Certificate of Eligibility" or "COE." As described below, a school district's MEP contact may provide the food service with a list of migrant children for the purpose of school meal eligibility.

In general under the ESEA, a migrant child is one who has moved across district lines, within the last three years, in order to accompany or join a parent or guardian who has moved to seek or obtain temporary or seasonal work in agriculture or fishing.

Migrant Education Program

The Migrant Education Program (MEP) is authorized under Title I of the ESEA to minimize the disruption caused by migrant children's frequent moves. Local Educational Agencies and other organizations receive ESEA grants to provide supplemental educational and support services to migrant children. The 28 Minnesota school districts that currently have MEP grants are listed below.

Once a child has been determined to be a migrant child, the MEP contact at the school district files a "Certificate of Eligibility" for the migrant child with the MN Department of Education.

Documentation of Migrant Status for School Nutrition Programs

At those school districts that have MEP grants, listed below, school food service should contact their MEP Coordinator to receive documentation on migrant children. At other districts with migrant children, the school food service should contact their Title I Coordinator. For the purpose of documenting eligibility to the school food service, USDA requires only that the MEP contact provide a dated list with each migrant child's name and the signature of the MEP contact. The school food service should disregard any Application for Educational Benefits submitted on behalf of the child.

Once eligibility has been established, the household must be notified of free school meal eligibility as soon as possible. It is particularly important that newly arrived migrant children be documented and certified for free meals as promptly as possible. Local Educational Agencies need to establish procedures that assure prompt notification to the school food service when a new migrant child is identified.

According to a recently revised School Nutrition Programs policy, school meal benefits for all students are approved for the entire school year. Therefore, free meal eligibility for a migrant child is effective for the entire school year without any updates from the MEP contact. Also, the school food service can extend school meal eligibility into the following school year for up to 30 operating days or until a new school meal eligibility determination is made, whichever occurs first.

If you have questions about school meal eligibility based on migrant status, contact Food and Nutrition Service - policy team at 651-582-8526, 800-366-8922, or e-mail to mde.fns@state.mn.us.

If you have questions about the Migrant Education Program and identification of migrant children, contact your local MEP Coordinator or Noemi Trevino, MDE Migrant Education Specialist, 651-582-8233 or e-mail to Noemi.Trevino@state.mn.us.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM GRANTS

1 - MINNEAPOLIS	810 - PLAINVIEW
11 - ANOKA-HENNEPIN	829 - WASECA
84 - SLEEPY EYE	836 - BUTTERFIELD
129 - MONTEVIDEO	837 - MADELIA
152 - MOORHEAD	840 - ST. JAMES
204 - KASSON-MANTORVILLE	846 - BRECKENRIDGE
347 - WILLMAR	858 - ST. CHARLES
392 - LECENTER	2125 - TRITON
394 - MONTGOMERY-LONSDALE	2176 - WARREN-ALVARADO
492 - AUSTIN	2190 - YELLOW MEDICINE
518 - WORTHINGTON	2310 - SIBLEY EAST
535 - ROCHESTER	2364 - BELGRADE-BROOTEN
593 - CROOKSTON	2397 - LESUEUR-HENDERSON
625 - ST. PAUL	2534 - BOLD
656 - FARIBAULT	2753 - LONG PRAIRIE
727 - BIG LAKE	2856 - STEPHEN-ARGYLE
740 - MELROSE	2859 - GLENCOE-SILVER LAKE
742 - ST. CLOUD	2860 - BLUE EARTH
761 - OWATONNA	2890 - RENVILLE COUNTY WEST



DATE: July 29, 2004
TO: Sponsors of School Nutrition Programs
FROM: Linda Rosenbaum-Grubbs, Supervisor, Food & Nutrition Service
SUBJECT: Meal Benefits for Refugee Students Based on Homeless Status

Many schools are receiving a number of new students from refugee families. Please be aware that these students may qualify to receive free school meals based on homeless status. According to the policy on homeless students issued in June 2002, the definition of “homeless children” includes “children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to lack of housing, economic hardship, or other reason.”

At school districts, food service and the district’s homeless education liaison should connect to go over the procedure for qualifying refugee children to receive free school meals. If you do not know the name of your school district homeless education liaison please contact the Title I director in your district. The homeless education liaison will determine whether a student qualifies as homeless. When the homeless education liaison certifies to the food service that a student is homeless, the student is eligible for free school meals without completing an Applications for Educational Benefits.

According to the homeless policy, a host family’s household size and income is not taken into account when determining eligibility for a homeless child. (However, the homeless family size and income is considered when determining eligibility for the host family, if the host family is providing financial support to the homeless family.)

For more details on eligibility for homeless students, refer to the complete policy in the June 2002 memo, “Eligibility and Documentation of Homeless Children for School Nutrition Programs,” which is available from the Free and Reduced Price Meals Section on the NSLP-Memos & Policies page of the FNS website, <https://fns.state.mn.us>.

If you have any question about this information, please contact Food and Nutrition Service - policy team at 651-592-8526, 800-366-8922, or e-mail to mde.fns@state.mn.us.



651.582.8526

Toll Free MN 800.366.8922

**FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE
MEMORANDUM**

Date: June 14, 2002

To: SPONSORING AUTHORITIES of School Nutrition Programs
And LEA Homeless Education Liaisons

From: Mary Begalle, Director
Food & Nutrition Service
Anne St. Pierre Cutler, Manager
Division of Learner Options

Subject: **Eligibility and Documentation of Homeless Children for School Nutrition Programs**

Summary

January 2002 amendments to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act affected the participation of homeless children in School Nutrition Programs. This policy provides an expanded definition of "homeless" and describes how homeless shelter directors and school district homeless education liaisons may provide documentation of school meal eligibility for homeless children to school food authorities.

We encourage school food authorities to identify and work with the homeless education liaison and directors of homeless shelters to expedite benefits to homeless children. If you have school meal eligibility questions, contact FNS at 651-582-8526 or toll free at 800-366-8922. For more information about children experiencing homelessness, contact the school district's homeless education liaison or Tom Gray, Education for Homeless Children and Youth State Coordinator, at 651-582-8282.

Policy

Definition of "Homeless" Children

Homeless children are those children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes:

- (i) Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- (ii) Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- (iii) Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) Migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described above.

School food authorities should work with their homeless education liaison and, where appropriate, the State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth to help ensure that these children, as well as other children who are defined as homeless by a director of a homeless shelter, have access to the benefits of School Nutrition Programs.

Documentation of Homeless Status

School officials may accept documentation that children are homeless from the school district education liaison for homeless children or directors of homeless shelters where the children reside, in lieu of an Application for Educational Benefits. Documentation from the liaison or shelter director must include:

- Child's name or a list of names,
- Effective date(s), and
- Signature and title of the liaison or director.

School officials must work closely with the homeless education liaison and directors of homeless shelters to ensure that children from homeless situations are provided free meal benefits as promptly as possible, as well as to ensure that the school food service is promptly advised when children leave the school or are no longer considered homeless. In the latter case, school officials must provide the household with an Application for Educational Benefits.

In cases where a child or family is defined as homeless by virtue of temporary residency with another household, the household size and income of the host family is not taken into consideration in determining the free meal eligibility for the child(ren) designated as homeless by the local educational agency liaison.

Eligibility of Host Families

When a host family applies for free and reduced price meals for their own children, the host family may include the homeless family as household members if the host family provides financial support to the homeless family, such as shelter, utilities, clothing or food. In such cases, the host family must also include any income received by the homeless family. School officials must determine eligibility for the host family in the traditional manner. (However, free meal eligibility for the homeless child is based on the documentation provided by the local homeless education liaison, even when the child is included on the host family's free and reduced price meal application.) If the host family meets the free or reduced price meal eligibility criteria, school officials should provide the host family with temporary approval for free or reduced price meal benefits. The host family's eligibility should be reevaluated when their household size decreases due to the departure of the homeless family.

Background

Since 1992, School Nutrition Programs policy has provided procedures for determining the eligibility of homeless children. These procedures used a definition of homeless that included only children residing in shelters. The policy authorized a shelter director or a local official to complete an application and approve a child for free meals based solely on the knowledge that the child's address was a homeless shelter or that the child had no known address. In addition, if it was not practical for those officials to complete individual applications, free meal eligibility could be documented with a list of children including child's name, effective date, place of residence and signature of a determining official.

In January 2002 the definition of "homeless" was greatly expanded. Although many homeless individuals will be living in emergency and transitional shelters, the expanded definition recognizes a variety of situations including homeless families and children who temporarily reside with host families.

The January 2002 changes also require school districts to designate a liaison for homeless children and youth. In general, some of the duties of the homeless education liaison are to ensure that homeless children are identified by school personnel, that they have full opportunity to enroll and succeed in school, and that they receive educational and other support services for which they are eligible. School food authorities are asked to be particularly sensitive to children and households who are identified by the education liaison as homeless.

Required Actions for School Food Authorities

- Use the definition provided in this memorandum to qualify homeless children for school meal benefits. Document eligibility of homeless children as allowed in this memorandum. A list of homeless children may be accepted from a shelter director or the school district homeless education liaison.
- Review lists accepted from shelter directors and homeless education liaisons to ensure the requirements of this policy have been met. Retain lists for the same three-year period required for Applications for Educational Benefits.
- Apply the requirements of this policy when reviewing an Application for Educational Benefits for a host family (the family with which a homeless family or child temporarily resides). Approve a host family for temporary benefits when their eligibility is dependent on including the homeless family or child in the household size and income.
- Provide an Application for Educational Benefits to a family that no longer qualifies for free meals based on homeless status.