

Civil Rights Training

School Nutrition Programs (SNP)

What are Civil Rights?

Civil Rights refer to the:

- **Rights of “personal liberty” guaranteed by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and Acts of Congress.**
- **Fair and equitable treatment of all customers and employees**

Goals of Civil Rights

- **Eliminate barriers to program benefits.**
- **Provide equal treatment to all.**
- **Explain rights and responsibilities.**
- **Show respect and dignity to all.**

What is a Protected Class?

A protected class refers to any person or group of people who have a characteristic for which discrimination is prohibited by law.

Protected classes in the SNP include:

- Race
- Age
- Color
- Sex
- National origin
- Disability

Civil Rights

A Sponsor's Responsibilities

- 1. Collection and use of racial/ethnic data.**
- 2. Public notification system.**
- 3. Equal access to programs.**
- 4. Reasonable accommodation of person with disabilities.**
- 5. Reasonable accommodation-language assistance.**
- 6. Complaint procedures.**

Collection and Use of Racial and Ethnic Data

5 Racial Categories:

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

2 Ethnic Categories:

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

Racial and Ethnic Data

- **Maintained for three years plus the current year.**
- **Access restricted to authorized school personnel.**

Public Notification

- **Public Release:** Inform potentially eligible persons, applicants, participants and grassroots organizations of the availability of the SNP.
- **Display the “And Justice for All” poster.**
- **Include the nondiscrimination statement on all informational materials and websites that describe the SNP.**

Public Notification

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal and, where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, [complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities and wish to file either an EEO or program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish).

Persons with disabilities who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact us by mail directly or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Equal Access

A school must provide equal access to all eligible participants regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

Reasonable Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities

**A school is required to provide FOOD
SUBSTITUTIONS or MODIFICATIONS if:**

- A. A physician's statement is on file that describes the participant's disability (a disability defined in federal regulations) that prevents the participant from eating the regularly offered foods, and...**
- B. The physician has indicated the substitutions or modifications that the participant needs.**

Reasonable Accommodation

Situation: A parent of a student who has been diagnosed with celiac disease demands that gluten-free food items be provided to their child at all meals and snacks.

What must the school do, and how does this relate to civil rights?

Reasonable Accommodation

Situation: Representatives from an ethnic minority group contact the school and request that ethnic food choices be made available.

Could their request be a civil rights issue?

Reasonable Accommodation Language Assistance

Sponsors must take reasonable steps to assure “meaningful” access to the information and services they provide...especially for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Meaningful access could include:

- **The distribution of SNP meal benefit forms (Applications for Educational Benefits, household letter and Approval/Denial letter) in 34 different languages.**
- **Hiring a bilingual interpreter to assist applicants or participants.**

Complaint Procedures

If a participant has a civil rights complaint in regard to their participation in the School Nutrition Programs, advise them to send the complaint to:

USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (Voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish)

Complaint Procedures

- **The school is encouraged to discuss the civil rights issue with the person who has filed the complaint in an effort to resolve the problem at the lowest level as expeditiously as possible.**
- **Whether or not the issue is resolved at the school level, a person alleging discrimination has a right to file a complaint within 180 days of the discriminatory action and must be advised of confidentiality.**

Complaint Procedures

- **If the complaint is verbal and the person alleging discrimination is not inclined to put the allegation in writing, the person to whom the complaint was made must write up the complaint on behalf of the complainant.**
- **The complaint write-up should be kept on file for 180 days from the dates of the alleged discriminatory action.**

Civil Rights Compliance Assessment Form

- **School Civil Rights Compliance Assessment Form — Schools**
- **Federal regulations for School Nutrition Programs require a School Food Authority (SFA) to complete this assessment annually by October 31 and maintain on file.**

Civil Rights Questions

If you have any questions about meeting civil rights requirements for School Nutrition Programs, contact the Minnesota Department of Education, Food and Nutrition Service.

Phone: 651-582-8526

Toll-free: 800-366-8922

E-mail: mde.fns@state.mn.us