



## Child Nutrition & Wellness

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Distributed to School Nutrition Program Authorized Representatives and Food Service Directors  
via Email

Here are a few updates on what's happening now.

### Time for Verification

Verification is confirmation of eligibility for reduced price and free meals under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. The following sponsors do not complete verification:

- Sponsors participating in ONLY the Special Milk Program
- Residential Child Care Institutions that do not also operate a school

All other sponsors must select and verify eligibility for a sample of applications approved for benefits. One person should coordinate verification activities for the sponsor.

Important deadlines for the verification process are:

- **Oct. 1** – Count applications and students approved for reduced price and free meals. Applications and students that are in “carry-over” status on October 1 are not included in this count. Complete the Pre-Verification Worksheet in KN-CLAIM to determine the number of applications that must be verified and the sponsor’s options for selecting the sample of applications.
- **Nov. 15** – Complete all verification activities. This deadline is the same whether it falls on a weekday or weekend.
- **Dec. 15** – Complete reporting of Post-Verification Results in KN-CLAIM.

USDA requires KSDE to annually report verification data for each sponsor. This information is pulled from the Pre-Verification Worksheet and the Post-Verification Results screens in KN-CLAIM. So please make sure that the information entered is accurate, complete and submitted on time.

For instructions on the verification process and all related forms (including KSDE’s Spanish translations), go to [www.kn-eat.org](http://www.kn-eat.org), School Nutrition Programs, Guidance, Food Service Facts, Chapter 8 – Verification of Eligibility.

### Leadership Forum

KSDE is sponsoring the Leadership Forum for district-level directors, supervisors and managers. It will be held in Wichita on Friday, October 23, 2009 preceding the annual School Nutrition Association of Kansas (SNA-KS) Annual Conference.

The Leadership Forum is an exciting, new and unique event. Last month, you were invited to complete a survey to indicate top priorities to be addressed at the Forum. Based on the survey results, the Forum will have two main focal areas: (1) financial management and cost control and (2) nutrition education/wellness policy implementation. Outstanding directors from all areas of the State will share their best practices in these areas. There will also be information about other high priority topics, announcements about new KSDE initiatives, and opportunities for networking.

There is no registration fee and KSDE will provide a complimentary lunch for participants. For more information and the registration form, go to [www.kn-eat.org](http://www.kn-eat.org), School Nutrition Programs, What's New. Registrations are due to KSDE by October 12.

Also, after the Forum, consider staying in Wichita for the SNA-KS Annual Conference. It's going to be a great opportunity for learning and fun! We hope to see you there!

### Leadership Connections

The Leadership Forum has caused some to ask if we're still doing Leadership Connections meetings this fall. Absolutely yes! KSDE's Child Nutrition Consultants will hold 30 regional Leadership Connections meetings between October 20 and November 6. Letters announcing the meeting dates and locations were just mailed. This fall's program is called "**Simple, Smart and Safe: Simplifying Work from the Office to the Dish Room**". Food service directors, managers, cooks, servers, and all food service employees have important work. How to improve the efficiency of that work will be the training topic. The meetings will also feature announcements, networking and awards for professional development and manager certification. In addition, we'll be distributing some absolutely beautiful nutrition education posters that will look amazing on your lunchroom walls! Don't miss out.

### Meal "Equivalent" Cost Data

Today we are making available a new report in KN-CLAIM called "Meal Equivalents and Per Meal Expenditures". To view the report, go to the KN-CLAIM Application Menu. In the "Other Items" section, click on Financial Management.

**What's the purpose of the report?** It is intended to help you understand and analyze the "big picture" of your program's revenue and expenditures. The report is created using data from the sponsor's reimbursement claims and Annual Financial Report (formerly called the Annual Financial Status Summary). So of course, it is only as accurate as the data the sponsor provides to KSDE.

**What is a meal equivalent?** A meal equivalent is equal to the revenue from one free lunch which was \$2.8225 last school year. This amount is divided by the revenue from one free breakfast (\$1.40 last school year) to determine how many breakfasts it takes to equal one lunch ( $\$2.8225 / \$1.40 = 2.0160714$  breakfasts per 1 lunch).

**How does it work?** Meals claimed and revenue reported are used to compute the number of meal equivalents served by a sponsor during a program year (i.e. July 1 through June 30). The sponsor's total expenditures are divided by the total number of meal equivalents to compute the average cost per meal equivalent.

**Why does this matter?** This report can provide valuable insights into your budget. Is your cost per meal equivalent higher than the free reimbursement rate? That could be a problem!

A thorough explanation of how to use and understand this information goes beyond the scope of this memo. But we are beginning work on designing a financial management system for school nutrition programs that will provide more information and additional tools.

**How accurate is the information?** As previously mentioned, the information is only as accurate as the data submitted by the sponsor on its reimbursement claims and financial reports. Please note that there are currently two known short-comings in this report:

1. It does not include Child and Adult Care Food Program meals (CACFP); although if a sponsor participates in the CACFP that program's expenditures are included. We're working on incorporating the CACFP into the report.
2. Non-reimbursable revenue is converted into meal equivalents by dividing the revenue by the free lunch reimbursement. Because we do not have separate information about a la carte pricing and expenditures, this amounts to a guess.

Over the last year, KSDE's consultants have shared this report with many individual sponsors. The sponsors have found it to be interesting and have asked to have access to it. If you have questions or suggestions for improving the report, please contact your area consultant or our office.

### **Acceptable Milk Substitutes for Students with Food Allergies/Intolerances**

As explained in recent update memos and at this summer's Administrative Workshops, federal regulations governing milk substitutions for food allergies or intolerances have changed. The only allowable fluid milk substitute for a student with a food allergy or intolerance is lactose-free milk or another beverage that meets all of USDA's specific nutrient criteria. Initially, we expected USDA to identify beverages that meet these requirements. However, a recent USDA policy memo indicated that it was up to each local sponsor to identify acceptable substitutes. To assist sponsors, we've recently identified three soymilk products that meet USDA's criteria and are sold in Kansas. For further information about these products, go to [www.kn-eat.org](http://www.kn-eat.org), School Nutrition Programs, Guidance, Food Service Facts, Chapter 19.

### **What's in Season?**

As we work to include a greater variety of fruits and vegetables in all of our programs, it helps to know what's in season. We've just posted a month-by-month list of seasonal produce: [www.kn-eat.org](http://www.kn-eat.org), School Nutrition Programs, Guidance, Food Service Facts, Chapter 32.

### **Reauthorization of Child Nutrition Programs**

The federal law authorizing the Child Nutrition Programs expires every five years and must be reauthorized by Congress. Congress was supposed to reauthorize Child Nutrition Programs by September 30. Due to other priorities in Washington, that did not happen. Although we have not received official notice, it is expected that Congress will soon vote to extend the programs. We do not anticipate any gaps in the availability of reimbursement funds. The formal reauthorization process will likely be delayed until 2010. We will keep you posted as things develop.

### **Remember to Celebrate National School Lunch Week (NSLW)**

Are you ready to celebrate NSLW on October 12-16, 2009? A link to the School Nutrition Association's promotional materials for NSLW is available at [www.kn-eat.org](http://www.kn-eat.org), School Nutrition Programs, What's New. NSLW provides an excellent opportunity to let everyone know about delicious and nutritious school meals!

This memo and other updates can also be accessed at [www.kn-eat.org](http://www.kn-eat.org), School Nutrition Programs, What's New. Have a great October and as always, if you have questions or need assistance, please contact our office or your area KSDE child nutrition consultant.