



Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

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DATE: May 3, 2017

MEMO CODE: SP 28-2017

SUBJECT: Revised Prototype Free and Reduced Price Application for SY 2017-2018

TO: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

Attached to this memorandum, please find a revised edition of the Prototype Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, with an accompanying instructions document. These materials have been updated for use in school year (SY) 2017-2018, and may be adapted for direct use by State and local agencies, or as a reference for designing an effective application packet that meets all statutory and regulatory requirements. Use of the revised application forms is optional and the prototype materials released in SP 34-2016, *Revised Prototype Free and Reduced Price Application Materials for SY 2016-17*, may still be used.

In SY 2016-2017, the USDA Office of Civil Rights received over 1,700 applications for free and reduced price school meals as well as other related application materials. These applications were intended for local officials who make eligibility determinations and were not complaints of discrimination. The applications were forwarded by USDA to the appropriate State and local agencies for eligibility determinations. In an effort to ensure applications are received in a timely manner by the appropriate authorities, USDA has made minor design changes to the Prototype Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals.

The changes made to the prototype application and instructions are intended to help local educational agencies (LEAs) ensure that families submit their applications to the appropriate location. Program operators that use this prototype application in the upcoming school year guarantee compliance with Federal requirements and will meet all criteria examined during administrative reviews for the application in SY 2017-2018.

## **Design Changes**

In the heading of Step 4 of the prototype application, FNS has added a field for program operators to include a mailing address where households may send completed applications. Additionally, a field has been added to Step 4 in the application instructions where program operators should include the mailing address where households may send completed applications. These modifications are intended to provide additional clarity for applicants and ensure that local officials receive applications promptly and children do not experience a gap in meal service due to confusion about where applications should be submitted. Inclusion of these elements on application forms developed by State agencies and LEAs is optional, but strongly encouraged. LEAs are also encouraged to consider other methods of informing families that school meal applications and other related materials should not be submitted directly to USDA.

## **Availability of Prototype Free and Reduced Price Application Materials**

All the prototype documents are currently available on the FNS website at:  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/applying-free-and-reduced-price-school-meals>.

The prototype application is made available in the following formats for ease of adaptation at the State and local level:

- Adobe PDF (fillable)
- Microsoft Word

All other prototype documents are made available in Microsoft Word.

State agencies are reminded to distribute this memorandum to Program operators immediately. Program operators should direct any questions regarding this memorandum to the appropriate State agency. State agency contact information is available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/school-meals-contacts>. State agencies should direct questions to the appropriate FNS Regional Office.



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