

FEBRUARY 12, 1999

SUBJECT: Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Policy Memorandum #18-99:  
Certifying Eligibility of Sites Serving American Indian or Alaska Native  
Children

TO: Regional Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

This memorandum permits SFSP sponsors to use information from a tribal authority to certify the eligibility of certain sites serving American Indian or Alaska Native children. It is intended to make it easier for sponsors to reach children on reservations and tribal lands where SFSP continues to be underutilized. This memorandum is effective upon issuance, and will remain in effect until superseded by regulation or future memorandum.

Section 225.6(c)(2)(ii) of the regulations require sponsors to document the eligibility of their proposed sites. For most types of sites, sponsors must show that their food service will serve children from areas in which poor economic conditions exist. Sponsors may use a number of sources, including school data, census tract data, or income eligibility statements, to support the eligibility of a site. This memorandum allows a sponsor to document eligibility by submitting appropriate information from a tribal authority. The documentation must certify that the proposed site is located on a reservation, on a trust land, or in an Alaska Native village where poor economic conditions exist.

This provision is similar to the provision in section 225.6(c)(2)(ii)(A), which simplifies certification of migrant sites. It addresses our concern that SFSP is not widely available on reservations or tribal lands, despite the compelling health and nutrition needs of American Indian and Alaska Native children. Child mortality rates and the rates of illness are higher for American Indian and Alaska Native children than for other American children. Census data has shown that 51 percent of the Indian population residing on reservations live below the Federal poverty level (100 percent of poverty). Compared to Americans of all races, the Indian population has a greater proportion of families who continue to live below the poverty level.

Like the provision for migrant sites, this policy will reduce paperwork burden for sponsors and families. We hope it will facilitate sponsorship and make it easier to bring the important meal benefits of SFSP to American Indian and Alaska Native children. Please share this information with your State agencies. If you have any questions concerning any of the issues addressed in this memorandum, please contact Melissa Rothstein or Susan Ponemon.

/Original Signed/

STANLEY C. GARNETT  
Director  
Child Nutrition Division