

JAN 29 2002

SUBJECT: Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): Flexibility of Time Restrictions
on Meal Service

TO: Regional Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All Regions

This memorandum provides flexibility to State agencies to approve changes in the length of time between meal services and duration of meal services in special cases. As you know, Section 225.16(c) requires that at least three hours elapse between the beginning of one meal service and the beginning of another (four hours must elapse between lunch and supper if no snack is served). The duration of meal service is limited to two hours for lunch and supper and one hour for all other meals.

It has come to our attention that these restrictions may impose barriers to participation for some feeding sites in the SFSP. As such, we are allowing reasonable variances from the meal service requirements to accommodate unique circumstances. For example, a school sponsor may wish to serve SFSP meals on the same schedule that it serves meals during the school year under the National School Lunch Program, a program that has different meal service requirements than SFSP. Another site may serve breakfast at 9:00 a.m. and lunch at 12:00 p.m. Busses are scheduled to pick the children up at 12:15 p.m. In this situation, the State agency may allow the site to begin lunch service at 11:45 a.m. to give the children more time to eat.

Sponsors that are interested in serving SFSP meals that vary from the requirements in Section 225.16(c) must first receive approval from their State agency. Sponsors will need to justify to the State agency their need for flexibility in the SFSP meal service requirements and submit this documentation to the State agency with their request. States may approve requests that are reasonable and continue to support the Department's efforts to minimize abuses of SFSP funds and plate waste (i.e., well-spaced meal services). State agency approvals should be made on a case-by-case basis. It is important to note that this flexibility should be allowed on a limited, as-needed basis. We believe this memorandum best accommodates school sponsors; however, the State agency may, at its discretion, allow other organizations to vary from the regulatory requirements if there is an acceptable need.

Please contact Melissa Rothstein or Mandy Briggs at (703) 305-2590 if you have any questions regarding this memorandum.

Original Signed

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Director
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