

## CHILDREN'S FREE AND REDUCED PRICE ELIGIBILITY

Once an RCCI has been approved to operate the NSLP/SBP, it is necessary to establish the eligibility of the children participating at the RCCI. RCCIs must maintain the names, ages (must be under 21 years of age) and entry and departure dates of all participating children in the NSLP and SBP.

The eligibility requirements of residential students are determined differently for those who are day students.

### Institutionalized Children

An institutionalized child is considered a one-person household since he/she is not living with his/her actual family as an economic unit. The RCCI need not obtain an application or signature from an adult household member. Since an institutionalized child is defined as a family of one, program eligibility for institutionalized children is based on income received by the child; the family's income is not included. **Payments from any source directly received by the institution on a child's behalf are not considered income to the child. Only the income a child earns from employment and/or personally receives while in residence at the institution is considered income.** As a result, meals for most institutionalized children can be claimed as free because the children's personal income falls well within the free eligibility guidelines.

In order to properly document the eligibility of institutionalized children, an RCCI may use one of the following methods:

**A. The Statement of Facts** - The simplest method of documenting children's eligibility is to have a signed Statement of Facts on file at the RCCI. This is a written statement outlining the general policy or condition within the RCCI which would cause all its institutionalized children (not including day students) to be eligible for free benefits. A prototype form is included in Appendix B. The following are some acceptable examples of what would qualify as Statement of Facts:

**Example 1:** "All our children are wards of the court. They are not permitted to earn, receive or retain any money while in our custody."

**Example 2:** "Our students are permitted to hold part-time jobs (up to 16 hours per week). The maximum earnings we have seen have been \$83.00 per week. We also permit students to get up to \$5.00 per week from home, but require any money received or earned to be turned in to our 'bank' and to be drawn out only with permission."

**B. Eligibility Roster** - If an RCCI does not have a predetermined policy which dictates the allowable income to children, then it may wish to record eligibility determinations, by child, on a list. A sample eligibility roster is included in Appendix C. It must contain the following information:

- child's name;
- date of eligibility determination;
- category of eligibility; and
- approving official's signature/initials.

## **Day Students Attending RCCI**

Day students are children who attend, but do not reside in an RCCI. A student's eligibility for free, reduced or paid meal benefits is determined based on the student's household size and income or Food Stamp/TANF participation. A Statement of Facts does **not** cover the eligibility of day students as it does for the institutionalized children.

To determine a day student's eligibility, RCCIs must obtain documentation of his/her free and reduced status from the regular school of attendance or have the child's family apply with your facility. In some situations, day students may already be enrolled at a regular school and if eligible, should have an approved application on file there. RCCIs may request a copy of the approved free and reduced application from the school.

For other day students not transferring from a regular school, prototype free and reduced applications which contain all required language and instructions, as well as the required parent letter, can be obtained online at <http://www.doe.in.gov/nutrition/snp-free-and-reduced-price-forms>. Applications must be distributed to households at the beginning of each program year, normally July. The RCCI can mail the application home to all households or send the applications home with the day students. The RCCI must review applications, make eligibility determinations, complete Verification and other requirements in relation to processing applications by using the Eligibility Manual for School Meals found here: <http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/nutrition/2013-eligibility-manual.pdf>.

### **For Categorical Eligibility Based on Food Stamp and/or TANF information, the application must include:**

- name of the child for whom application is made;
- food stamp or TANF case number for the child for whom application is made; and
- signature of an adult household member.

### **For Eligibility Based on Household Size and Income, the application must include:**

- names of all household members;
- amount and source of income received in the prior month by each member;
- the last 4 digits of the social security number of the adult household member who signs the application or an indication that the household member does not have one; and
- signature of an adult household member.

Day students from households currently certified to receive Food Stamp/TANF assistance are categorically eligible for free benefits. If a household does not receive such benefits, then reported income must fall within Federal eligibility guidelines to entitle a child to free or reduced price meal benefits.

Along with free and reduced applications of day students, RCCIs with day students should also keep an eligibility roster. As mentioned in the previous section, an eligibility roster records the names of all children in the RCCI along with the appropriate eligibility information. Please note that although one Eligibility Roster can be used for both institutionalized children and day students, the eligibility and documentation requirements differ between the two groups. Care should be taken to ensure that the eligibility requirements are met for both institutionalized children and day students. The Eligibility Roster does not determine the eligibility of students, but records the eligibility of students for free and reduced price benefits.

## **Verification**

Unless an RCCI approves and processes free and reduced applications for day students, RCCIs are exempt from verification efforts. Please check with your SA for specific verification requirements and procedures.

## **Questions about Eligibility**

### **Q: Are residential institutions which operate only on weekends eligible for participation in the SNPs?**

A: No. It is the intent of the law that a residential institution provide continuous child care service. Since an institution operating only on weekends is not open continuously, it is not eligible to participate.

### **Q: When an institution maintains only a portion of its membership in residence and another group of children attend daily but reside elsewhere, is it eligible to participate in the SNPs?**

A: Yes, the primary basis for eligibility of an institution to participate is its residential status. As long as some children reside in the institution, it is considered residential and eligible to participate. However, any children **under** age 21 who participate in the institution's program may receive full program benefits in the SNPs regardless of whether they reside at the institution. However, each eligibility status must be determined individually based on the criteria described above.

### **Q: When adults are also in residence in the institution, must children reside in a physically separate unit or wing within the institution?**

A: It is the intent of the regulations to serve children who reside in an institution which is designed and operated primarily for the care of children or in a separate children's wing or in an identifiable area of an institution. As such, even though an institution primarily serves and cares for adults, the regulations have been written to allow these types of institutions to participate if the residing children are located in a distinct part of the institution designed primarily for the care of children.

### **Q: Are RCCIs, such as, runaway shelters that have temporary clientele, eligible for participation in SNPs?**

A: As long as the institution itself operates on a continuous basis, it can participate in SNPs. Due to the short-term services these types of institutions provide, it is of the utmost importance that complete records be maintained for three years to document claims. Such records should clearly illustrate in sufficient detail, by type of meal (breakfast or lunch), that all meals served on any given day and claimed for reimbursement were eligible for such reimbursement. Careful records of entrance and exit dates of each resident and their eligibility category during their stay must be kept.

### **Q: Are homeless shelters that house both adults and children and do not physically segregate the children from the adults eligible to participate in the SNPs?**

A: No, homeless shelters which cannot demonstrate a primary mission of service to children or which permit families to reside together are not eligible to participate as RCCIs. However, children are eligible to participate in the Special Milk Program (SMP) as "settlement houses" and claim milk served to children. Contact your SA for details.

### **Q: If a child, who resides in an RCCI, attends a traditional school during the day, how is an eligibility determination made for the child at the day school?**

A: To apply for free and reduced price benefits at the day school, the RCCI must submit to the day school an application on behalf of the child. A complete application for an institutionalized child must include:

- a) the child's name;
- b) the child's personal income (money earned or received in hand) and how often it is received;
- c) signature of an adult from the RCCI.

The day school would then review the application based on the household size and income reported. A list of residents provided to the school by the RCCI is not sufficient.

**Q: When a correctional facility serves as an RCCI, what is the definition of separate areas for inmates under twenty-one?**

A: If inmates who are eligible for the CNPs reside on one side of a corridor with non-eligible inmates on the opposite side, the distinct or separate wing or identifiable area requirement is satisfied. If there is an "under twenty-one" corridor or wing, then the requirement is satisfied.