

Effects of Busing on Area Eligibility

Purpose:

This instruction sets forth the policy on area eligibility due to busing.

Scope:

Sponsors participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Afterschool Snack and Seamless Summer Option through the National School Lunch Program.

Description:

There is a potential barrier to program participation when school children in public school systems are being assigned (by way of busing) to a school outside the attendance area of their neighborhood school. For purposes of this memorandum, we will refer to this practice as “busing”.

Busing can have the effect of causing a site located in an area in which poor economic conditions exist to be designated as ineligible based on enrollment data which has been adjusted to reflect student reassignments.

This situation may occur in any program in which site eligibility is based on the percentage of children eligible for free and reduced-price meals in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The effect of busing is especially significant to sites applying to participate in the Summer Food Service Program, in At-risk Afterschool Programs under the Child and Adult Care Food Program and in the Seamless Summer Option and the Afterschool Snack Program under the NSLP. This is because the eligibility of meal service sites for these situations is generally associated with the neighborhood school where the children live rather than where children actually attend school.

To address this issue we have determined that, in situations where public schools routinely bus children from their neighborhood school to other schools, site eligibility based on school data may be determined using one of two methods. The Program sponsor may determine eligibility based on the enrollment/attendance data obtained for:

- the school the children attend and are bused to, or
- the school the children would have attended were it not for the school's busing policy (the neighborhood school where the children live).

Program sponsors may determine a site to be area eligible in situations as described above only if the school food authority is able to document the percentage of children eligible for free and

reduced-price meals at each school before and after students are reassigned. The same method of determining site eligibility must be used for all sites participating under that program sponsor to avoid duplicate counting.

SOURCE: FNS INSTRUCTION, MAY 20, 2003.