

Food and Nutrition Service, USDA

§ 226.23

(7) Contracts shall recognize mandatory standards and policies relating to energy efficiency which are contained in the State energy efficiency conservation plan issued in compliance with the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (Pub. L. 94-163).

(m) Institutions shall maintain a contract administration system insuring that contractors perform in accordance with the terms, conditions, and specifications of their contracts or purchase orders.

[47 FR 36527, Aug. 20, 1982, as amended at 71 FR 39519, July 13, 2006]

§ 226.23 Free and reduced-price meals.

(a) The State agency must not enter into a Program agreement with a new institution until the institution has submitted, and the State agency has approved, a written policy statement concerning free and reduced-price meals to be used in all child and adult day care facilities under its jurisdiction, as described in paragraph (b) of this section. The State agency must not require an institution to revise its free and reduced-price policy statement or its nondiscrimination statement unless the institution makes a substantive change to either policy. Pending approval of a revision to these statements, the existing policy must remain in effect.

(b) Institutions that may not serve meals at a separate charge to children (including emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and sponsoring organizations of emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and day care homes) and other institutions that elect to serve meals at no separate charge must develop a policy statement consisting of an assurance to the State agency that all participants are served the same meals at no separate charge, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and that there is no discrimination in the course of the food service. This statement shall also contain an assurance that there will be no identification of children in day care homes in which meals are reimbursed at both the tier I and tier II reimbursement rates, and that the sponsoring organization will not make any free and reduced price eligibility information con-

cerning individual households available to day care homes and will otherwise limit the use of such information to persons directly connected with the administration and enforcement of the Program.

(c) Independent centers and sponsoring organizations of centers which charge separately for meals shall develop a policy statement for determining eligibility for free and reduced-price meals which shall include the following:

(1) The specific criteria to be used in determining eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. The institution's standards of eligibility shall conform to the Secretary's income standards;

(2) A description of the method or methods to be used in accepting applications from families for free and reduced-price meals. Such methods will ensure that applications are accepted from households on behalf of children who are TANF recipients or who are members of food stamp or FDPIR households or, for adult participants, who are members of a food stamp or FDPIR household or SSI or Medicaid participants;

(3) A description of the method or methods to be used to collect payments from those participants paying the full or reduced price of the meal which will protect the anonymity of the participants receiving a free or reduced-price meal;

(4) An assurance which provides that the institution will establish a hearing procedure for use when benefits are denied or terminated as a result of verification:

(i) A simple, publicly announced method for a family to make an oral or written request for a hearing;

(ii) An opportunity for the family to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person in presenting its appeal;

(iii) An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal;

(iv) That the hearing shall be held with reasonable promptness and convenience to the family and that adequate notice shall be given to the family as to the time and place of the hearing;

(v) An opportunity for the family to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting its position;

(vi) An opportunity for the family to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses;

(vii) That the hearing shall be conducted and the determination made by a hearing official who did not participate in making the initial decision;

(viii) The determination of the hearing official shall be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and made a part of that hearing record;

(ix) That the family and any designated representatives shall be notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official;

(x) That a written record shall be prepared with respect to each hearing, which shall include the decision under appeal, any documentary evidence and a summary of any oral testimony presented at the hearing, the decision of the hearing official, including the reasons therefor, and a copy of the notification to the family of the decision of the hearing official; and

(xi) That such written record of each hearing shall be preserved for a period of three years and shall be available for examination by the family or its representatives at any reasonable time and place during such period;

(5) An assurance that there will be no overt identification of free and reduced-price meal recipients and no discrimination against any participant on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or handicap;

(6) An assurance that the charges for a reduced-price lunch or supper will not exceed 40 cents, that the charge for a reduced-price breakfast will not exceed 30 cents, and that the charge for a reduced-price snack will not exceed 15 cents.

(d) Each institution shall annually provide the information media serving the area from which the institution draws its attendance with a, unless the State agency has issued a Statewide media release on behalf of all institutions. All media releases issued by institutions other than emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and sponsoring organizations of emer-

gency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, or day care homes must include the Secretary's Income Eligibility Guidelines for Free and Reduced-Price Meals. The release issued by all emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and sponsoring organizations of emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, or day care homes, and by other institutions which elect not to charge separately for meals, must announce the availability of meals at no separate charge. The release issued by child care institutions which charge separately for meals shall announce the availability of free and reduced-price meals to children meeting the approved eligibility criteria. The release issued by child care institutions shall also announce that children who are TANF recipients, food stamp or FDPIR households, or are Head Start participants are automatically eligible to receive free meal benefits. The release issued by adult day care centers which charge separately for meals shall announce the availability of free and reduced-price meals to participants meeting the approved eligibility criteria. The release issued by adult day care centers shall also announce that adult participants who are members of food stamp or FDPIR households or who are SSI or Medicaid participants are automatically eligible to receive free meal benefits. All releases shall state that meals are available to all participants without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age or handicap.

(e)(1) *Application for free and reduced-price meals.* (i) For the purpose of determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals, institutions (other than emergency shelters and at-risk afterschool care centers) shall distribute applications for free and reduced price meals to the families of participants enrolled in the institution. Sponsoring organizations of day care homes shall distribute applications for free and reduced price meals to day care home providers who wish to enroll their own eligible children in the Program. At the request of a provider in a tier II day care home, sponsoring organizations of day care homes shall distribute applications for free and reduced price meals to the households of all children

enrolled in the home, except that applications need not be distributed to the households of enrolled children that the sponsoring organization determines eligible for free and reduced price meals under the circumstances described in paragraph (e)(1)(vi) of this section. These applications, and any other descriptive material distributed to such persons, shall contain only the family-size income levels for reduced price meal eligibility with an explanation that households with incomes less than or equal to these levels are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Such forms and descriptive materials may not contain the income standards for free meals. However, such forms and materials distributed by child care institutions other than sponsoring organizations of day care homes shall state that, if a child is a member of a food stamp or FDPIR household or is a TANF recipient, the child is automatically eligible to receive free Program meal benefits, subject to the completion of the application as described in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section; such forms and materials distributed by sponsoring organizations of day care homes shall state that, if a child or a child's parent is participating in or subsidized under a Federally or State supported child care or other benefit program with an income eligibility limit that does not exceed the eligibility standard for free or reduced price meals, meals served to the child are automatically eligible for tier I reimbursement, subject to the completion of the application as described in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section, and shall list any programs identified by the State agency as meeting this standard; such forms and materials distributed by adult day care centers shall state that, if an adult participant is a member of a food stamp or FDPIR household or is a SSI or Medicaid participant, the adult participant is automatically eligible to receive free Program meal benefits, subject to the completion of the application as described in paragraph (e)(1)(iii) of this section. Sponsoring organizations of day care homes shall not make free and reduced price eligibility information concerning individual households available to day care homes and shall

otherwise limit the use of such information to persons directly connected with the administration and enforcement of the Program. However, sponsoring organizations may inform tier II day care homes of the number of identified income-eligible enrolled children. If a State agency distributes, or chooses to permit its sponsoring organizations to distribute, applications to the households of children enrolled in tier II day care homes which include household confidentiality waiver statements, such applications shall include a statement informing households that their participation in the program is not dependent upon signing the waivers. Furthermore, such forms and materials distributed by child care institutions shall state that if a child is a Head Start participant, the child is automatically eligible to receive free Program meal benefits, subject to submission by Head Start officials of a Head Start statement of income eligibility or income eligibility documentation.

(ii) Except as provided in paragraph (e)(1)(iv) of this section, the application for children shall contain a request for the following information:

(A) The names of all children for whom application is made;

(B) The names of all other household members;

(C) The social security number of the adult household member who signs the application, or an indication that he/she does not possess a social security number;

(D) The income received by each household member identified by source of income (such as earnings, wages, welfare, pensions, support payments, unemployment compensation, social security, and other cash income received or withdrawn from any other source, including savings, investments, trust accounts, and other resources);

(E) A statement to the effect that "In certain cases, foster children are eligible for free and reduced-price meals regardless of household income. If such children are living with you and you wish to apply for such meals, please contact us.";

(F) A statement that includes substantially the following information, "The Richard B. Russell National

§ 226.23

7 CFR Ch. II (1-1-10 Edition)

School Lunch Act requires the information on this application. You do not have to give the information, but if you do not, we cannot approve your child for free or reduced price meals. You must include the social security number of the adult household member who signs the application. The social security number is not required when you apply on behalf of a foster child or you list a Food Stamp, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) case number for your child or other (FDPIR) identifier or when you indicate that the adult household member signing the application does not have a social security number. We will use your information to determine if your child is eligible for free or reduced price meals, and for administration and enforcement of the Program.” When the State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, plans to use or disclose children’s eligibility information for non-program purposes, additional information, as specified in paragraph (k) of this section, must be added to the Privacy Act notice/statement. State agencies and child care institutions are responsible for drafting the appropriate notice and ensuring that the notice complies with section 7(b) of the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a note (Disclosure of Social Security Number)); and

(G) The signature of an adult member of the household which appears immediately below a statement that the person signing the application certifies that all information furnished is true and correct; that the application is being made in connection with the receipt of Federal funds; that Program officials may verify the information on the application; and that the deliberate misrepresentation of any of the information on the application may subject the applicant to prosecution under applicable State and Federal criminal statutes.

(iii) Except as provided in paragraph (e)(1)(v) of this section, the application for adults shall contain a request for the following information:

(A) The names of all adults for whom application is made;

(B) The names of all other household members;

(C) The social security number of the adult household member who signs the application, or an indication that he/she does not possess a social security number;

(D) The income received by source of income (such as earnings, wages, welfare, pensions, support payments, unemployment compensation, social security, and other cash income received or withdrawn from any other source, including savings, investments, trust accounts and other resources);

(E) A statement which includes substantially the following information: “Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act requires that, unless a food stamp, or FDPIR case number or SSI or Medicaid assistance identification number is provided for the adult for whom benefits are sought, you must include a social security number on the application. This must be the social security number of the adult household member signing the application. If the adult household member signing the application does not possess a social security number, he/she must indicate so on the application. Provision of a social security number is not mandatory, but if a social security number is not provided or an indication is not made that the adult household member signing the application does not have one, the application cannot be approved. This notice must be brought to the attention of the household member whose social security number is disclosed. The social security number may be used to identify the household member in carrying out efforts to verify the correctness of information stated on the application. These verification efforts may be carried out through program reviews, audits and investigations and may include contacting employers to determine income, contacting a food stamp, Indian tribal organization or welfare office to determine current certification for receipt of food stamps or FDPIR benefits, contacting the issuing office of SSI or Medicaid benefits to determine current certification for receipt of these benefits, contacting the State employment security office to determine the amount of benefits received, and

checking the documentation produced by household members to provide the amount of income received. These efforts may result in loss or reduction of benefits, administrative claims or legal action if incorrect information is reported.” State agencies and institutions shall ensure that the notice complies with section 7 of Pub. L. 93-579. If a State or local agency plans to use the social security numbers for CCFP verification purposes in a manner not described by this notice, the notice shall be altered to include a description of those uses; and

(F) The signature of an adult member of the household which appears immediately below a statement that the person signing the application certifies that all information furnished is true and correct; that the application is being made in connection with the receipt of Federal funds; that Program officials may verify the information on the application; and that the deliberate misrepresentation of any of the information on the application may subject the applicant to prosecution under applicable State and Federal criminal statutes.

(iv) If they so desire, households applying on behalf of children who are members of food stamp or FDPIR households who are TANF recipients may apply under this paragraph rather than under the procedures described in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section. In addition, households of children enrolled in tier II day care homes who are participating in a Federally or State supported child care or other benefit program with an income eligibility limit that does not exceed the eligibility standard for free and reduced price meals may apply under this paragraph rather than under the procedures described in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section. Households applying on behalf of children who are members of food stamp or FDPIR households; children who are TANF recipients; or for children enrolled in tier II day care homes, other qualifying Federal or State program, shall be required to provide:

(A) For the child(ren) for whom automatic free meal eligibility is claimed, their names and food stamp, FDPIR, or TANF case number; or for the households of children enrolled in tier II day

care homes, their names and other program case numbers (if the program utilizes case numbers); and

(B) The signature of an adult member of the household as provided for in paragraph (e)(1)(ii)(G) of this section. In accordance with paragraph (e)(1)(ii)(F) of this section, if a case number is provided, it may be used to verify the current certification for the child(ren) for whom free meal benefits are claimed. Whenever households apply for children not receiving food stamp, FDPIR, or TANF benefits; or for tier II homes, other qualifying Federal or State program benefits, they must apply in accordance with the requirements set forth in paragraph (e)(1)(ii) of this section.

(v) If they so desire, households applying on behalf of adults who are members of food stamp or FDPIR households or SSI or Medicaid participants may apply for free meal benefits under this paragraph rather than under the procedures described in paragraph (e)(1)(iii) of this section. Households applying on behalf of adults who are members of food stamp or FDPIR households or SSI or Medicaid participants shall be required to provide:

(A) The names and food stamp or FDPIR case numbers or SSI or Medicaid assistance identification numbers of the adults for whom automatic free meal eligibility is claimed; and

(B) The signature of an adult member of the household as provided in paragraph (e)(1)(iii)(F) of this section. In accordance with paragraph (e)(1)(iii)(G) of this section, if a food stamp or FDPIR case number or SSI or Medicaid assistance identification number is provided, it may be used to verify the current food stamp, FDPIR, SSI, or Medicaid certification for the adult(s) for whom free meal benefits are being claimed. Whenever households apply for benefits for adults not receiving food stamp, FDPIR, SSI, or Medicaid benefits, they must apply in accordance with the requirements set forth in paragraph (e)(1)(iii) of this section.

(vi) A sponsoring organization of day care homes may identify enrolled children eligible for free and reduced price meals (i.e., tier I rates), without distributing free and reduced price applications, by documenting the child's or

household's participation in or receipt of benefits under a Federally or State supported child care or other benefit program with an income eligibility limit that does not exceed the eligibility standard for free and reduced price meals. Documentation shall consist of official evidence, available to the tier II day care home or sponsoring organization, and in the possession of the sponsoring organization, of the household's participation in the qualifying program.

(2) *Letter to households.* Institutions shall distribute a letter to households or guardians of enrolled participants in order to inform them of the procedures regarding eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. The letter shall accompany the application required under paragraph (e)(1) of this section and shall contain:

(i) The income standards for reduced-price meals, with an explanation that households with incomes less than or equal to the reduced-price standards would be eligible for free or reduced-price meals (the income standards for free meals shall *not* be included in letters or notices to such applicants);

(ii) How a participant's household may make application for free or reduced-price meals;

(iii) An explanation that an application for free or reduced price benefits cannot be approved unless it contains complete "documentation" as defined in § 226.2.

(iv) The statement: "In the operation of child feeding programs, no person will be discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or handicap";

(v) A statement to the effect that participants having family members who become unemployed are eligible for free or reduced-price meals during the period of unemployment, provided that the loss of income causes the family income during the period of unemployment to be within the eligibility standards for those meals;

(vi) Except in the case of adult participants, a statement to the effect that in certain cases foster children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals regardless of the income of such household with whom they reside and that households wishing to apply for such

benefits for foster children should contact the institution; and

(vii) An explanation that households receiving free and reduced-price meals must notify appropriate institution officials during the year of any decreases in household size or increases in income of over \$50 per month or \$600 per year or—

(A) In the case of households of enrolled children that provide a food stamp, FDPIR or TANF case number to establish a child's eligibility for free meals, any termination in the child's certification to participate in the Food Stamp, FDPIR or TANF Programs, or

(B) In the case of households of adult participants that provide a food stamp or FDPIR case number or an SSI or Medicaid assistance identification number to establish an adult's eligibility for free meals, any termination in the adult's certification to participate in the Food Stamp, FDPIR, SSI or Medicaid Programs.

(3) In addition to the information listed in paragraph (e)(2) of this section pricing institutions must include in their letter to household an explanation that indicates that: (i) The information in the application may be verified at any time during the year; and (ii) how a family may appeal a decision of the institution to deny, reduce, or terminate benefits as described under the hearing procedure set forth in paragraph (c)(4) of this section.

(4) *Determination of eligibility.* The institution shall take the income information provided by the household on the application and calculate the household's total current income. When a completed application furnished by a family indicates that the family meets the eligibility criteria for free or reduced-price meals, the participants from that family shall be determined eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Institutions that are pricing programs shall promptly provide written notice to each family informing them of the results of the eligibility determinations. When the information furnished by the family is not complete or does not meet the eligibility criteria for free or reduced-price meals, institution officials must consider the participants from that family as not eligible for free or reduced-price

meals, and must consider the participants as eligible for "paid" meals. When information furnished by the family of participants enrolled in a pricing program does not meet the eligibility criteria for free or reduced-price meals, pricing program officials shall provide written notice to each family denied free or reduced-price benefits. At a minimum, this notice shall include:

- (i) The reason for the denial of benefits, e.g., income in excess of allowable limits or incomplete application;
- (ii) Notification of the right to appeal;
- (iii) Instructions on how to appeal; and
- (iv) A statement reminding the household that they may reapply for free or reduced-price benefits at any time during the year.

The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file at the institution.

(5) *Appeals of denied benefits.* A family that wishes to appeal the denial of an application in a pricing program shall do so under the hearing procedures established under paragraph (c)(4) of this section. However, prior to initiating the hearing procedures, the household may request a conference to provide all affected parties the opportunity to discuss the situation, present information and obtain an explanation of the data submitted on the application or the decision rendered. The request for a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing. The institution shall promptly schedule a fair hearing, if requested.

(f) Free, reduced-price and paid meal eligibility figures must be reported by institutions to State agencies at least once each year and shall be based on current family-size and income information of enrolled participants. Such information shall be no more than 12 months old.

(g) Sponsoring organizations for family day care homes shall ensure that no separate charge for food service is imposed on families of children enrolled in participating family day care homes.

(h) *Verification of eligibility.* State agencies shall conduct verification of eligibility for free and reduced-price

meals on an annual basis, in accordance with the verification procedures outlined in paragraphs (h) (1) and (2) of this section. Verification may be conducted in accordance with Program assistance requirements of §226.6(m); however, the performance of verification for individual institutions shall occur no less frequently than once every three years. Any State may, with the written approval of FNSRO, use alternative approaches in the conduct of verification, provided that the results achieved meet the requirements of this part. If the verification process discloses deficiencies with the determination of eligibility and/or application procedures which exceed maximum levels established by FNS, State agencies shall conduct follow-up reviews for the purpose of determining that corrective action has been taken by the institution. These reviews shall be conducted within one year of the date the verification process was completed. The verification effort shall be applied without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or handicap. State agencies shall maintain on file for review a description of the annual verification to be accomplished in order to demonstrate compliance with paragraphs (h) (1) and (2) of this section.

(1) *Verification procedures for non-pricing programs.* Except for sponsoring organizations of family day care homes, State agency verification procedures for nonpricing programs shall consist of a review of all approved free and reduced price applications on file. For sponsoring organizations of family day care homes, State agency verification procedures shall consist of a review only of the approved free and reduced price applications (or other documentation, if vouchers or other documentation are used in lieu of free and reduced price applications) on file for those day care homes that are required to be reviewed when the sponsoring organization is reviewed, in accordance with the review requirements set forth in §226.6(m). However, the State agency shall ensure that the day care homes selected for review are representative of the proportion of tier I, tier II, and tier II day care homes with

§ 226.23

7 CFR Ch. II (1-1-10 Edition)

a mix of income-eligible and non-income-eligible children in the sponsorship, and shall ensure that at least 10 percent of all free and reduced price applications (or other documentation, if applicable) on file for the sponsorship are verified. The review of applications shall ensure that:

(i) The application has been correctly and completely executed by the household;

(ii) The institution has correctly determined and classified the eligibility of enrolled participants for free or reduced price meals or, for family day care homes, for tier I or tier II reimbursement, based on the information included on the application submitted by the household;

(iii) The institution has accurately reported to the State agency the number of enrolled participants meeting the criteria for free or reduced price meal eligibility or, for day care homes, the number of participants meeting the criteria for tier I reimbursement, and the number of enrolled participants that do not meet the eligibility criteria for those meals; and

(iv) In addition, the State agency may conduct further verification of the information provided by the household on the approved application for program meal eligibility. If this effort is undertaken, the State agency shall conduct this further verification for nonpricing programs in accordance with the procedures described in paragraph (h)(2) of this section.

(2) *Verification procedures for pricing programs.* (i) For pricing programs, in addition to the verification procedures described in paragraph (h)(1) of this section, State agencies shall also conduct verification of the income information provided on the approved application for free and reduced price meals and, at State agency discretion, verification may also include confirmation of other information required on the application. However,

(A) If a food stamp, FDPIR or TANF case number is provided for a child, verification for such child shall include only confirmation that the child is included in a currently certified food stamp or FDPIR household or is a TANF recipient; or

(B) If a food stamp or FDPIR case number or SSI or Medicaid assistance identification number is provided for an adult, verification for such adult shall include only confirmation that the adult is included in a currently certified food stamp or FDPIR household or is currently certified to receive SSI or Medicaid benefits.

(ii) State agencies shall perform verification on a random sample of no less than 3 percent of the approved free and reduced price applications in an institution which is a pricing program.

(iii) Households shall be informed in writing that they have been selected for verification and they are required to submit the requested verification information to confirm their eligibility for free or reduced-price benefits by such date as determined by the State agency. Those households shall be informed of the type or types of information and/or documents acceptable to the State agency and the name and phone number of an official who can answer questions and assist the household in the verification effort. This information must include a social security number for each adult household member or an indication that he/she does not have one. State agencies shall inform selected households that:

(A) Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act requires that, unless households provide the child's food stamp, FDPIR or TANF case number, or the adult participant's food stamp or FDPIR case number or SSI or Medicaid assistance identification number, those selected for verification must provide the social security number of each adult household member;

(B) In lieu of providing a social security number, an adult household member may indicate that he/she does not possess one;

(C) Provision of a social security number is not mandatory, but if a social security number is not provided for each adult household member or an indication is not made that he/she does not possess one, benefits will be terminated;

(D) The social security number may be used to identify household members in carrying out efforts to verify the correctness of information stated on

Food and Nutrition Service, USDA

§ 226.23

the application and continued eligibility for the program. These verification efforts may be carried out through program reviews, audits, and investigations and may include contacting employers to determine income, contacting Federal, State or local agencies to determine current certification for receipt of food stamps or FDPIR, TANF, SSI or Medicaid benefits, contacting the State employment security office to determine the amount of benefits received, and checking the documentation produced by household members to prove the amount of income received. These efforts may result in loss or reduction of benefits, administrative claims or legal actions if incorrect information was reported; and

(E) This information must be provided to the attention of each adult household member disclosing his/her social security number. State agencies shall ensure that the notice complies with section 7 of Pub. L. 93-579 (Privacy Act of 1974). These households shall be provided with the name and phone number of an official who can assist in the verification effort.

(iv) Households of enrolled children selected for verification shall also be informed that if they are currently certified to participate in the Food Stamp, FDPIR, or TANF Program they may submit proof of that certification in lieu of income information. In those cases, such proof shall consist of a current "Notice of Eligibility" for Food Stamp, FDPIR, or TANF Program benefits or equivalent official documentation issued by a food stamp, Indian Tribal Organization, or welfare office which shows that the children are members of households or assistance units currently certified to participate in the Food Stamp, FDPIR, or TANF Programs. An identification card for any of these programs is not acceptable as verification unless it contains an expiration date. Households of enrolled adults selected for verification shall also be informed that if they are currently certified to participate in the Food Stamp Program or FDPIR or SSI or Medicaid Programs, they may submit proof of that certification in lieu of income information. In those cases, such proof shall consist of:

(A) A current "Notice of Eligibility" for Food Stamp or FDPIR benefits or equivalent official documentation issued by a food stamp, Indian Tribal Organization, or welfare office which shows that the adult participant is a member of a household currently certified to participate in the Food Stamp Program or FDPIR. An identification card is not acceptable as verification unless it contains an expiration date; or

(B) Official documentation issued by an appropriate SSI or Medicaid office which shows that the adult participant currently receives SSI or Medicaid assistance. An identification card is not acceptable as verification unless it contains an expiration date. All households selected for verification shall be advised that failure to cooperate with verification efforts will result in a termination of benefits.

(v) Sources of information for verification may include written evidence, collateral contacts, and/or systems of records.

(A) *Written evidence* shall be used as the primary source of information for verification. Written evidence includes written confirmation of a household's circumstances, such as wage stubs, award letters, letters from employers, and, for enrolled children, current certification to participate in the Food Stamp, FDPIR or TANF Programs, or, for adult participants, current certification to participate in the Food Stamp, FDPIR, SSI or Medicaid Programs. Whenever written evidence is insufficient to confirm eligibility, the State agency may use collateral contacts.

(B) *Collateral contact* is a verbal confirmation of a household's circumstances by a person outside of the household. The collateral contact may be made in person or by phone and shall be authorized by the household. The verifying official may select a collateral contact if the household fails to designate one or designates one which is unacceptable to the verifying official. If the verifying official designates a collateral contact, the contact shall not be made without providing written or oral notice to the household. At the time of this notice, the household shall be informed that it may consent to the

contact or provide acceptable verification in another form. The household shall be informed that its eligibility for free or reduced price meals shall be terminated if it refuses to choose one of these options. Termination shall be made in accordance with paragraph (h)(2)(vii) of this section. Collateral contacts could include employers, social service agencies, and migrant agencies.

(C) *Systems of records* to which the State agency may have routine access are not considered collateral contacts. Information concerning income, family size, or food stamp/FDPIR/TANF certification for enrolled children, or food stamp/FDPIR/SSI/Medicaid certification for enrolled adults, which is maintained by other government agencies and to which a State agency can legally gain access may be used to confirm a household's eligibility for Program meal benefits. One possible source could be wage and benefit information maintained by the State unemployment agency, if that information is available. The use of any information derived from other agencies must be used with applicable safeguards concerning disclosure.

(vi) Verification by State agencies of receipt of food stamps, FDPIR, TANF, SSI or Medicaid benefits shall be limited to a review to determine that the period of eligibility is current. If the benefit period is found to have expired, or if the household's certification has been terminated, the household shall be required to document their income eligibility.

(vii) The State agency may work with the institution to verify the documentation submitted by the household on the application; however, the responsibility to complete the verification process may not be delegated to the institution.

(viii) If a household refuses to cooperate with efforts to verify, or the verification of income indicates that the household is ineligible to receive benefits or is eligible to receive reduced benefits, the State agency shall require the pricing program institution to terminate or adjust eligibility in accordance with the following procedures. Institution officials shall immediately notify families of the denial of

benefits in accordance with paragraphs (e)(4) and (e)(5) of this section. Advance notification shall be provided to families which receive a reduction or termination of benefits 10 calendar days prior to the actual reduction or termination. The 10-day period shall begin the day the notice is transmitted to the family. The notice shall advise the household of: (A) The change; (B) the reasons for the change; (C) notification of the right to appeal the action and the date by which the appeal must be requested in order to avoid a reduction or termination of benefits; (D) instructions on how to appeal; and (E) the right to reapply at any time during the year. The reasons for ineligibility shall be properly documented and retained on file at the institution.

(ix) When a household disagrees with an adverse action which affects its benefits and requests a fair hearing, benefits shall be continued as follows while the household awaits the hearing:

(A) Households which have been approved for benefits and which are subject to a reduction or termination of benefits later in the same year shall receive continued benefits if they appeal the adverse action within the 10-day advance notice period; and

(B) Households which are denied benefits upon application shall not receive benefits.

(3) State agencies shall inform institution officials of the results of the verification effort and the action which will be taken in response to the verification findings. This notification shall be made in accordance with the procedures outlined in § 226.14(a).

(4) If the verification results disclose that an institution has inaccurately classified or reported the number of participants eligible for free, reduced-price or paid meals, the State agency shall adjust institution rates of reimbursement retroactive to the month in which the incorrect eligibility figures were reported by the institution to the State agency.

(5) If the verification results disclose that a household has not reported accurate documentation on the application which would support continued eligibility for free or reduced-price

meals, the State agency shall immediately adjust institution rates of reimbursement. However, this rate adjustment shall not become effective until the affected households have been notified in accordance with the procedures of paragraph (h)(2)(vi) of this section and any ensuing appeals have been heard as specified in paragraph (h)(2)(viii) of this section.

(6) *Verification procedures for sponsoring organizations of day care homes.* Prior to approving an application for a day care home that qualifies as tier I day care home on the basis of the provider's household income, sponsoring organizations of day care homes shall conduct verification of such income in accordance with the procedures contained in paragraph (h)(2)(i) of this section. Sponsoring organizations of day care homes may verify the information on applications submitted by households of children enrolled in day care homes in accordance with the procedures contained in paragraph (h)(2)(i) of this section.

(i) *Disclosure of children's free and reduced price meal eligibility information to certain programs and individuals without parental consent.* The State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, may disclose aggregate information about children eligible for free and reduced price meals to any party without parental notification and consent when children cannot be identified through release of the aggregate data or by means of deduction. Additionally, the State agency or institution may disclose information that identifies children eligible for free and reduced price meals to the programs and the individuals specified in this paragraph (i) without parental/guardian consent. The State agency or child care institution that makes the free and reduced price meal eligibility determination is responsible for deciding whether to disclose program eligibility information.

(1) *Persons authorized to receive eligibility information.* Only persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of a program or activity listed in paragraphs (i)(2) or (i)(3) of this section may have access to children's free milk eligibility information, without parental consent. Persons considered directly connected

with administration or enforcement of a program or activity listed in paragraphs (i)(2) or (i)(3) of this section are Federal, State, or local program operators responsible for the ongoing operation of the program or activity or persons responsible for program compliance. Program operators may include persons responsible for carrying out program requirements and monitoring, reviewing, auditing, or investigating the program. Program operators may include contractors, to the extent those persons have a need to know the information for program administration or enforcement. Contractors may include evaluators, auditors, and others with whom Federal or State agencies and program operators contract with to assist in the administration or enforcement of their program in their behalf.

(2) *Disclosure of children's names and free or reduced price meal eligibility status.* The State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, may disclose, without parental consent, only children's names and eligibility status (whether they are eligible for free meals or reduced price meals) to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of:

- (i) A Federal education program;
- (ii) A State health program or State education program administered by the State or local education agency;
- (iii) A Federal, State, or local means-tested nutrition program with eligibility standards comparable to the National School Lunch Program (i.e., food assistance programs for households with incomes at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty level); or
- (iv) A third party contractor assisting in verification of eligibility efforts by contacting households who fail to respond to requests for verification of their eligibility.

(3) *Disclosure of all eligibility information.* In addition to children's names and eligibility status, the State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, may disclose, without parental/guardian consent, all eligibility information obtained through the free and reduced price meal eligibility process (including all information on the application or obtained through direct certification) to:

(i) Persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of programs authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. This means that all eligibility information obtained for the Child and Adult Care Food Program may be disclosed to persons directly connected with administering or enforcing regulations under the National School Lunch Program, Special Milk Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) (Parts 210, 215, 220, 225 and 246, respectively, of this chapter);

(ii) The Comptroller General of the United States for purposes of audit and examination; and

(iii) Federal, State, and local law enforcement officials for the purpose of investigating any alleged violation of the programs listed in paragraphs (i)(2) and (i)(3) of this section.

(4) *Use of free and reduced price meals eligibility information by programs other than Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).* State agencies and child care institutions may use children's free milk eligibility information for administering or enforcing the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Additionally, any other Federal, State, or local agency charged with administering or enforcing the Child and Adult Care Food Program may use the information for that purpose. Individuals and programs to which children's free or reduced price meal eligibility information has been disclosed under this section may use the information only in the administration or enforcement of the receiving program. No further disclosure of the information may be made.

(j) *Disclosure of children's free or reduced price meal eligibility information to Medicaid and/or SCHIP, unless parents decline.* Children's free or reduced price meal eligibility information only may be disclosed to Medicaid or SCHIP when both the State agency and the child care institution so elect, the parent/guardian does not decline to have their eligibility information disclosed and the other provisions described in paragraph (j)(1) of this section are met.

The State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, may disclose children's names, eligibility status (whether they are eligible for free or reduced price meals), and any other eligibility information obtained through the free and reduced price meal application or obtained through direct certification to persons directly connected with the administration of Medicaid or SCHIP. Persons directly connected to the administration of Medicaid and SCHIP are State employees and persons authorized under Federal and State Medicaid and SCHIP requirements to carry out initial processing of Medicaid or SCHIP applications or to make eligibility determinations for Medicaid or SCHIP.

(1) The State agency must ensure that:

(i) The child care institution and health insurance program officials have a written agreement that requires the health insurance program agency to use the eligibility information to seek to enroll children in Medicaid and SCHIP; and

(ii) Parents/guardians are notified that their eligibility information may be disclosed to Medicaid or SCHIP and given an opportunity to decline to have their children's eligibility information disclosed, prior to any disclosure.

(2) *Use of children's free and reduced price meal eligibility information by Medicaid/SCHIP.* Medicaid and SCHIP agencies and health insurance program operators receiving children's free and reduced price meal eligibility information must use the information to seek to enroll children in Medicaid or SCHIP. The Medicaid and SCHIP enrollment process may include targeting and identifying children from low-income households who are potentially eligible for Medicaid or SCHIP for the purpose of seeking to enroll them in Medicaid or SCHIP. No further disclosure of the information may be made. Medicaid and SCHIP agencies and health insurance program operators also may verify children's eligibility in a program under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 or the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.

(k) *Notifying households of potential uses and disclosures of children's free and reduced price meal eligibility information.*

Food and Nutrition Service, USDA

§ 226.23

Households must be informed that the information they provide on the free and reduced price meal application will be used to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals and that their eligibility information may be disclosed to other programs.

(1) For disclosures to programs, other than Medicaid or SCHIP, that are permitted access to children's eligibility information, without parent/guardian consent, the State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, must notify parents/guardians at the time of application that their children's free or reduced price meal eligibility information may be disclosed. The State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, must add substantially the following statement to the Privacy Act notice/statement required under paragraph (e)(1)(ii)(F) of this section, "We may share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits for their programs; auditors for program reviews; and law enforcement officials to help them look into violations of program rules." For children determined eligible for free meals through direct certification, the notice of potential disclosure may be included in the document informing parents/guardians of their children's eligibility for free meals through direct certification.

(2) For disclosure to Medicaid or SCHIP, the State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, must notify parents/guardians that their children's free or reduced price meal eligibility information will be disclosed to Medicaid and/or SCHIP unless the parent/guardian elects not to have their information disclosed and notifies the State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, by a date specified by the State agency or child care institution, as appropriate. Only the parent or guardian who is a member of the household or family for purposes of the free and reduced price meal application may decline the disclosure of eligibility information to Medicaid or SCHIP. The notification must inform parents/guardians that they are not required to consent to the disclosure, that the information, if disclosed, will be used to identify eligible children

and seek to enroll them in Medicaid or SCHIP, and that their decision will not affect their children's eligibility for free or reduced price meals. The notification may be included in the letter/notice to parents/guardians that accompanies the free and reduced price meal application, on the application itself or in a separate notice provided to parents/guardians. The notice must give parents/guardians adequate time to respond if they do not want their information disclosed. The State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, must add substantially the following statement to the Privacy Act notice/statement required under paragraph (e)(1)(ii)(F) of this section, "We may share your information with Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program, unless you tell us not to. The information, if disclosed, will be used to identify eligible children and seek to enroll them in Medicaid or SCHIP." For children determined eligible for free meals through direct certification, the notice of potential disclosure and opportunity to decline the disclosure may be included in the document informing parents/guardians of their children's eligibility for free meals through direct certification process.

(1) *Other disclosures.* State agencies and child care institutions that plan to use or disclose information about children eligible for free and reduced price meals in ways not specified in this section must obtain written consent from children's parents or guardians prior to the use or disclosure.

(1) The consent must identify the information that will be shared and how the information will be used.

(2) There must be a statement informing parents and guardians that failing to sign the consent will not affect the child's eligibility for free or reduced price meals and that the individuals or programs receiving the information will not share the information with any other entity or program.

(3) Parents/guardians must be permitted to limit the consent only to those programs with which they wish to share information.

(4) The consent statement must be signed and dated by the child's parent or guardian who is a member of the

§ 226.24

household for purposes of the free and reduced price meal application.

(m) *Agreements with programs/individuals receiving children's free or reduced price meal eligibility information.* Agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) are recommended or required as follows:

(1) The State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, should have a written agreement or MOU with programs or individuals receiving eligibility information, prior to disclosing children's free and reduced price meal eligibility information. The agreement or MOU should include information similar to that required for disclosures to Medicaid and SCHIP specified in paragraph (m)(2) of this section.

(2) For disclosures to Medicaid or SCHIP, the State agency or child care institution, as appropriate, must have a written agreement with the State or local agency or agencies administering Medicaid or SCHIP prior to disclosing children's free or reduced price meal eligibility information to those agencies. At a minimum, the agreement must:

(i) Identify the health insurance program or health agency receiving children's eligibility information;

(ii) Describe the information that will be disclosed;

(iii) Require that the Medicaid or SCHIP agency use the information obtained and specify that the information must be used to seek to enroll children in Medicaid or SCHIP;

(iv) Require that the Medicaid or SCHIP agency describe how they will use the information obtained;

(v) Describe how the information will be protected from unauthorized uses and disclosures;

(vi) Describe the penalties for unauthorized disclosure; and

(vii) Be signed by both the Medicaid or SCHIP program or agency and the State agency or child care institution, as appropriate.

(n) *Penalties for unauthorized disclosure or misuse of children's free and reduced price meal eligibility information.* In accordance with section 9(b)(6)(C) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(6)(C)), any individual who publishes, divulges, discloses or makes known in any manner,

7 CFR Ch. II (1–1–10 Edition)

or to any extent not authorized by statute or this section, any information obtained under this section will be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for up to 1 year, or both.

[47 FR 36527, Aug. 20, 1982]

EDITORIAL NOTE: For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 226.3, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and on GPO Access.

Subpart F—Food Service Equipment Provisions

§ 226.24 Property management requirements.

Institutions and administering agencies shall follow the policies and procedures governing title, use, and disposition of equipment obtained by purchase, whose cost was acquired in whole or part with food service equipment assistance funds in accordance with 7 CFR part 3016 or 7 CFR part 3019, as applicable.

[48 FR 41142, Sept. 14, 1983, as amended at 71 FR 39519, July 13, 2006]

Subpart G—Other Provisions

§ 226.25 Other provisions.

(a) *Grant closeout procedures.* Grant closeout procedures for the Program shall be in accordance with 7 CFR part 3016 or 7 CFR part 3019, as applicable.

(b) *State requirements.* Nothing contained in this part shall prevent a State agency from imposing additional requirements for participation in the Program which are not inconsistent with the provisions of this part; however, any additional requirements shall be approved by FNSRO and may not deny the Program to an eligible institution.

(c) *Value of assistance.* The value of assistance to participants under the Program shall not be considered to be income or resources for any purposes under any Federal or State laws, including, but not limited to laws relating to taxation, welfare, and public assistance programs.

(d) *Maintenance of effort.* Expenditure of funds from State and local sources for the maintenance of food programs for children shall not be diminished as