

October 9, 2013

Dear Authorized Representative/Food Service Director:

Please review the information below and take the necessary action. This information is emailed to the Authorized Representative and Food Service Director for your School Food Authority (SFA). If you have a question or desire assistance please contact your area consultant or me and we will work together to address your concern. If you desire additional staff members to receive the monthly emails please send me their contact information and I will add them to the distribution list.

Sincerely, Patti Harding, Administrative Consultant

Notice from USDA: Furloughed Federal Employees and F&RP Meal Benefit Eligibility In response to questions that the Food and Nutrition Services has received regarding furloughed employees and their qualification for free and reduced Program meal benefits, guidance is provided below. Thanks for your patience and let me know if you have any questions. Question: Can households of furloughed employees be approved for free or reduced price school meal benefits? Should they be removed from the program when the furlough is over? Answer: The income eligibility guidelines for free and reduced price school meals are based on annual income. While there is no prohibition on households with furloughed employees applying for benefits during a furlough, school food authorities (SFAs) should manage the application process in a manner which reflects their unique circumstances. During the furlough period, these households may not have information on the duration of the furlough or its ultimate impact on household income. Therefore, it is reasonable for SFAs to remind households that free or reduced price eligibility is intended to reflect actual annual income. School districts should urge any families who are approved for free or reduced-price meals based on their reduced income during a furlough period to terminate their free/reduced price status should the economic hardship they had anticipated due to the furlough be remedied by a return to work and/or restoration of pay for the furlough period. In addition, families should be made aware that if they are selected for verification later in the school year, they will be required to produce documentation of actual income for the application month. School districts may choose to verify applications "for cause" if they have specific information indicating that the information on the application is not accurate.