USDA Foods Program Overview

The Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services manages the USDA Foods Program for schools in the state of Iowa. The role of the state is to help School Food Authorities (SFA) obtain USDA purchased commodity foods. Each year, schools are given a Planned Assistance Level (PAL), which is based on the number of reimbursable lunches they serve in the previous school year and the federal meal rate. Each SFA decides how to use their PAL budget. The USDA Foods Program is available to schools in the following ways:

- **Direct Distributions (DD):** DD is the traditional way to use PAL funds. In late winter/early spring the State Agency will survey SFAs to see what items they would like available on these orders. During the school year SFAs order from a variety of bulk items 6 times. The State Agency orders these foods directly from the USDA, on behalf of SFAs, and manages distribution to all participating schools. The State Agency elects to offer a small number of processed items as part of the 6 yearly distributions. These items carry an additional processing fee. PAL funds cover the value of the USDA Foods, but SFAs are responsible for payment of delivery, processing, and storage fees.

- **Diverted Foods (DF):** DF is an optional way to use PAL funds for processed foods. Each Spring SFAs can elect to allocate dollars towards the purchase of commodity processed items for the following school year. The State Agency, along with the Advisory Council, solicit and award contracts for various commodity processed end products. During the school year SFAs can order these products from their commercial food distributor. PAL funds cover the value of the commodity food contained in the product, but SFAs are responsible for payment of processing and distributor fees.

- **DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (DoD):** DoD is an optional way to use PAL funds for fresh produce. In late winter, SFAs can elect to allocate dollars towards the purchase of these items for the following school year. During the school year SFAs can order produce as often as once per week through FFAVORS. PAL funds cover the cost of the produce in addition to the delivery fees.

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