



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 754, East Tower, Atlanta, GA 30334
(404) 656-5957

Nathan Deal
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: All Institutions and Sponsors Participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

From: Falita S. Flowers, Nutrition Services Director (*Original Signed*)

Date: January 13, 2016

Subject: Disclosure Requirements for the Child Nutrition Programs

Definitions: “Disclosure” means reveal or use individual children's program eligibility information obtained through the free and reduced price meal eligibility process for a purpose other than for the purpose for which the information was obtained. The term refers to access, release, or transfer of personal data about children by means of print, tape, microfilm, microfiche, electronic communication or any other means [7 CFR 226 and 2 CFR 225].

Legal Authority: USDA Policy Memoranda CACFP 06-2016; SFSP 10-2016

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a reminder regarding the restrictions on disclosure of sensitive information collected through the Child Nutrition Programs. This memorandum also clarifies the applicability of disclosure protections for individual student eligibility information collected for purposes of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This memorandum supersedes USDA Policy Memorandum, “*Disclosure Requirements for the Child Nutrition Programs*,” dated August 23, 2010, SP 31-2010, CACFP 17-2010, SFSP 15-2010.

FNS recognizes CACFP institutions and SFSP sponsors may on occasion be asked to provide free and reduced price eligibility information about individual children and may have concerns about disclosing the confidential information. While FNS encourages and supports appropriate disclosure of information, each request must be carefully reviewed. In order to disclose individual eligibility information, an official must first determine if the request is from one of the programs or sources authorized under the statute. If so, the official must ensure that the person(s) who would receive and use the information has a legitimate need for this information in order to carry out an authorized activity.

Generally, CACFP institutions and SFSP sponsors may disclose individual child information only to those persons, including organizations, specifically authorized by the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA), 42 USC 1751, et seq., and the disclosure of individual children’s eligibility information for purposes other than establishing eligibility for Program meals generally is not permitted without parental consent.

DECAL will ensure that all appropriate Program staff have a thorough understanding of the laws and policies on disclosure of individual eligibility information. Additionally, FNS recommends that there be a primary contact for such requests at the institution or sponsor level, such as the Program Contact or Sponsor Contact, rather than staff at individual facilities. This would allow for more consistent and appropriate application of the disclosure requirements.

As discussed in more detail below, please keep in mind that:

- statutory and regulatory requirements limit the release of child eligibility information without the written consent of the child’s parent or guardian;
- the disclosure of aggregate information by a CACFP institution or SFSP sponsor is discretionary; and
- an agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) between State or local agencies regarding the disclosure of information may be required and, if not required, is recommended.

Also, aggregate information will often meet the needs of the requestor and can be disclosed by a CACFP institution or SFSP sponsor in lieu of individual child information whenever possible. However, Program operators are prohibited from disclosing aggregate information when participants can be identified through the release.

Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

Section 9(b)(6) of the NSLA (42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(6)) outlines the restrictions on the disclosure and use of information obtained from an application for free and reduced price meals, as well as the criminal penalties for improper release of information. Note that while the statutory provision references applications for school meals, similar provisions apply to the CACFP and SFSP.

FNS recommends that State agencies and as applicable, CACFP institutions and SFSP sponsors, provide information on the pertinent statutory and regulatory provisions in response to requests for release of child eligibility information. The regulations implementing the NSLA disclosure provisions are as follows:

Program	Definition of Disclosure	Provisions on Privacy Act Notice and Disclosure to Other Programs
Summer Food Service Program	7 CFR 225.2	7 CFR 225.15(f)-(l)
Child and Adult Care Food Program	7 CFR 226.2	7 CFR 226.23(e) and (i)-(n)

Please also see the attached “Disclosure Chart,” which briefly outlines various types of requestors and any restrictions on receipt of participant eligibility information.

Data Sharing with Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)

Section 9(b)(6)(A)(iv) of the NSLA includes specific authority allowing LEAs to disclose individual eligibility information to Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/7cfr-part-245-free-and-reduced-price-eligibility>, 7 CFR 245.6(g)) without first

obtaining parental consent. This regulatory provision can also apply to the CACFP and SFSP. Prior to disclosing the information, CACFP institutions and SFSP sponsors must allow the parent or guardian to decline the Medicaid and SCHIP benefits. Parents may do so by signing and submitting an “opt out” form that explains that unless the parent or guardian signs and submits the “opt out” form, eligibility information will be shared with Medicaid or SCHIP. A sample of an “opt out form” is available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/E-SchoolMealApp.pdf>. The NSLA specifies the “opt out” procedures are only for Medicaid/SCHIP purposes; therefore, institutions and sponsors may not use the same Medicaid/SCHIP opt-out form to release eligibility information for other programs or for other situations.

Inter-Agency Agreements

Before the State agency administering the Child Nutrition Programs may disclose individual child eligibility information with the State agency administering Medicaid and SCHIP or the CACFP institution/SFSP sponsor and the local Medicaid or SCHIP agency, FNS regulations and guidance require that an agreement between agencies be developed in order to facilitate sharing information.

FNS also recommends that an agreement or MOU be used to share information in all instances where a children’s eligibility information is requested and subsequently approved for release, such as with other Federal or State education programs. An agreement or MOU should detail the procedures for information sharing, persons who will have access to the information, and why the information is needed, etc. Please refer to program regulations at 7 CFR 225.15(k) and 226.23(m) for more information on agreements.

Need to Know

In addition to being authorized to receive information, those requesting eligibility information must have a “need to know” which refers to persons determined to be “directly connected” with the administration or enforcement of a Federal education program, State education program, State health program, or a means-tested nutrition program, as well as to persons directly connected with the Comptroller General Office or law enforcement for an authorized activity. For instance, while Federal education programs are authorized, not all persons administering an education program in the school district need to access information (e.g., teachers, principals, or guidance counselors). State and local agencies must ensure that persons receiving a child’s free and reduced price eligibility information have a legitimate need to know.

Parental Consent for Disclosure of Eligibility Information

Once appropriate agreements are in place with requesting entities, disclosure of all individual eligibility information to any entity may be made if the child’s parent or guardian elects to share the information. The child’s parent or guardian must provide prior and informed consent by signing a consent for disclosure form. The form must clearly state the purpose of the program or service requesting the data, what level of information will be disclosed, and to whom, as appropriate. A prototype disclosure of information form is found at (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/E-SchoolMealApp.pdf>).

The parent or guardian signed disclosure form permits a CACFP institution and SFSP sponsor to disclose the household’s eligibility status or other meal application data, as appropriate to the requesting recipient of the information. CACFP institutions and SFSP sponsors may send out the disclosure form at the time the application is provided to households or as needed when services or programs become available. A common example of a program that would require written consent from a parent or guardian prior to disclosure of a child’s eligibility information is a State or local waiver of fees (for books, athletic activities, uniforms, etc.).

Without prior and informed consent by the student's parent or guardians, disclosure of eligibility data is limited by the recipient of the information, what information may be disclosed, and the requirements for the disclosure. For example, Federal, State, or local means tested nutrition programs with eligibility standards comparable to the NSLP may receive all eligibility information without prior notice and consent from a parent or guardian. However, local education programs may not receive any eligibility information unless parental consent is obtained. Should disclosure of information forms be used, they must be completed annually; consent may not be extended from one year to the next.

Periodically, CACFP institutions and SFSP sponsors will be asked to release eligibility information to a non-custodial parent or to a parent who has shared custody. For example, a father shares custody with the children's mother but believes that the mother has misrepresented household circumstances and that the children should not be eligible for free or reduced price meals. Disclosure of the requested information is not permitted under Federal law without written permission from the person who signed the application. If there is any question about disclosing this information for custody or divorce actions, local officials should contact the CACFP institution's or SFSP sponsor's attorney for assistance.

For questions concerning this memorandum, please contact Sonja Adams, Policy Administrator at (404) 651-8193.

<i>Recipient of Information</i>	<i>What May Be Disclosed</i>	<i>Requirements</i>
<i>Programs under the National School Lunch Act or Child Nutrition Act</i>	All eligibility information	Prior notice and consent not required
<i>Federal/State or local means tested nutrition programs with eligibility standards comparable to the NSLP</i>	Eligibility status only	Prior notice and consent not required
<i>Federal education programs</i>	Eligibility status only	Prior notice and consent not required
<i>State education programs administered by a State agency or local education agency</i>	Eligibility status only	Prior notice and consent not required
<i>Local education programs</i>	NO eligibility information, unless parental consent is obtained	Must obtain parental consent
<i>Medicaid or the State children's health insurance programs (SCHIP), administered by a State or local agency authorized under titles XIX or XXI of the Social Security Act to identify and enroll eligible children</i>	All eligibility information, unless parents elect not to have information disclosed	Must give prior notice to parents and opportunity for parents to decline to have their information disclosed
<i>State health programs other than Medicaid/SCHIP, administered by a State agency or local education agency</i>	Eligibility status only	Prior consent not required
<i>Federal health programs other than Medicaid/SCHIP</i>	NO eligibility information, unless parental consent is obtained	Must obtain parental consent
<i>Local health program</i>	NO eligibility information, unless parental consent is obtained	Must obtain parental consent
<i>Comptroller General of the United States for purposes of audit and examination</i>	All eligibility information	Prior notice and consent not required
<i>Federal, State or local law enforcement officials investigating alleged violations of any of the programs under the NSLA and CNA or investigating violations of any of the programs that are authorized to have access to names and eligibility status</i>	All eligibility information	Prior notice and consent not required