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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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**FISCAL YEAR 2008
CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM
OPERATIONAL MEMORANDUM #14**

TO: Child and Adult Care Food Program Institutions

FROM: Mary Ann Chartrand, Director
Grants Coordination and School Support

DATE: June 5, 2008

SUBJECT: Automatic Eligibility for Free Meal Benefits Extended to All Children Enrolled in Head Start

This operational memorandum provides guidance regarding amendments to the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) that extend automatic eligibility for free meal benefits to all children enrolled in Head Start and participating in child nutrition programs.

On December 12, 2007, the President signed The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-134) which contains several significant revisions to the Head Start program, including amendments to the eligibility criteria.

Head Start serves primarily children from families with household incomes at or below the Federal poverty level. However a small proportion of children in families with household incomes above the poverty level may be served. In the past, only those children who were income eligible for Head Start were considered automatically eligible for free meals in the child nutrition programs.

Public Law 110-134 makes any child enrolled in Head Start automatically eligible for Category A meals without further application or eligibility determination. Therefore, even a child who is not from a household with an income at or below the poverty level is automatically eligible for free meals if he/she is enrolled in Head Start.

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Institutions and school food authorities (SFA) may now establish eligibility of all Head Start enrollees through documentation provided by the Head Start Program. All reimbursable meals served to children enrolled in Head Start may be claimed at the Category A rate.

Institutions and SFAs that served meals to Head Start children who were claimed as Category B or C, may amend claims and change these meals to Category A. All such reimbursable meals served on December 12, 2007 and beyond may be claimed as Category A. Claim amendments must be submitted to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) by August 31, 2008. Documentation for claim amendments must be kept on file at the institution. MDE program analysts will review claim amendment documents on the next administrative review. For questions concerning this memorandum, contact the CACFP office at 517-373-7391.