



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

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SUBJECT: Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2010: Questions and Answers Related to the Certification of Compliance with Meal Requirements for the National School Lunch Program

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

Attached are Revised Questions and Answers related to the interim rule entitled, *Certification of Compliance with Meal Requirements for the National School Lunch Program under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*. Under section 201 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, an additional reimbursement of 6 cents per lunch is available for school food authorities certified to be in compliance with the new school meal patterns. The interim rule establishes the requirements related to certification and this new performance-based reimbursement. The attached Revised Questions and Answers reflect questions we have received and provide additional information on these requirements. New questions are in *red italics*.

Any questions concerning this guidance should be addressed to the appropriate FNS Regional Office. Regional Offices with questions should contact the Child Nutrition Division.

Original Signed

for Cynthia Long
Director
Child Nutrition Division

Attachment

Background

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) requires the additional 6 cents per lunch reimbursement be provided to school food authorities (SFAs) certified by a State agency to be in compliance with the new meal pattern requirements. The HHFKA explicitly states that SFAs found out of compliance will not receive the additional reimbursement.

The certification process for the 6 cents performance-based reimbursement works as follows:

- SFA submits certification documentation to State agency
- State agency makes a certification determination within 60 days
- State agencies conduct validation reviews of 25 percent of certified SFAs in School Year (SY) 2012-2013
- Certified SFAs must annually attest to ongoing compliance with the meal patterns through SY 2014-2015
- Ongoing compliance with the meal pattern requirements is monitored during administrative reviews (currently known as coordinated review effort (CRE))

General

Q1. What is the purpose of the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement?

The additional 6 cents per lunch reimbursement provided to SFAs certified to be in compliance with the new meal patterns is intended to assist SFAs in meeting the new meal patterns. Since it is a performance-based reimbursement it is expected to encourage SFAs to implement the updated requirements as quickly as possible.

Q2. When will the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement be available?

Section 201 of the HHFKA makes the additional reimbursement available for lunches meeting the updated meal pattern requirements on October 1, 2012, and no earlier. In order to be eligible to receive this new performance-based reimbursement, the State agency must certify that the SFA is in compliance with the requirements of the final meal pattern rule published in the *Federal Register* on January 26, 2012.

Q3. Can an SFA opt out of receiving the 6 cents reimbursement?

No, the new meal pattern requirements effective July 1, 2012, are not optional. The 6 cents reimbursement is meant to encourage SFAs to implement the updated requirements as quickly as possible. While there is no deadline for submitting certification documentation, all SFAs are required to meet the new meal patterns and be certified for the 6 cents reimbursement.

Q4. Does the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement increase take into account annual inflation?

Yes, FNS will prescribe annual adjustments to the performance-based cash assistance rate (6 cents) at the same time adjustments are made to the national average payment rates. These adjustments, which reflect changes in the food away from home series of the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers, are annually announced by Notice in July of each year in the *Federal Register*. The first adjustment to the 6 cents will occur in July 2013.

Q5. What assistance will be provided to State agencies for certification activities?

The HHFKA provided \$47 million in each of Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013 to assist State agencies with State-level costs associated with training, technical assistance, certification and oversight activities associated with implementing the updated meal patterns, certifying SFAs, and providing the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement to certified SFAs. Given that the heaviest workload for certification is expected to occur this coming Summer and Fall, State agencies may determine that contractor support is the most practical approach in the early implementation phases, which would be an allowable use of these funds or of State administrative expense funds. For example, State agencies may obtain a contractor to conduct certification or validation activities.

Q6. What materials will FNS provide to State agencies and SFAs to support certification?

In addition to Powerpoint presentations, Questions and Answers, and other ongoing guidance and technical assistance on the certification process, FNS has provided:

- a menu worksheet and a simplified nutrient assessment worksheet, in Excel format;
- a prototype contract solicitation package to assist State agencies that wish to procure contract support for meal pattern certification activities.

The prototype contract solicitation package can be found at:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/6centsmaterials.pdf>.

We are also exploring the possibility of providing cycle menus that meet the new requirements, and encourage State agencies and SFAs to use the School Meal Pattern Clearinghouse for sharing information. The clearinghouse is located at <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/bestpractices>.

Certification Process

Q7. What is the certification process?

On October 1, 2012, an additional 6 cents per lunch reimbursement becomes available to school food authorities certified by the State agency to be in compliance with the updated meal pattern requirements. State agencies are required to establish certification procedures which allow SFAs to submit documentation demonstrating compliance with the updated meal pattern requirements for State agency review and approval. While each State agency's certification procedures will be customized, generally the procedures will require SFAs to submit documentation demonstrating compliance with the updated meal patterns consistent with the final meal pattern regulation, the interim rule on certification of compliance with the 6 cents requirements, and subsequent guidance provided by FNS, including these questions and answers.

Q8. How frequently must State agencies conduct certification?

State agencies must only certify an SFA once. Once an SFA has been granted certification, ongoing compliance with meal pattern requirements will be monitored through administrative reviews. The only exception to this one-time certification is if the State agency is unable to

confirm SFA compliance during an on-site validation review. In that case, the SFA must re-apply for certification.

Q9. When may a State agency begin approving applications from SFAs to receive the extra 6 cents per lunch reimbursement?

The earliest a State agency may certify SFAs for the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement is July 1, 2012, the beginning of SY 2012-2013. This date reflects the compliance date for the updated meal pattern requirements. State agencies and SFAs are reminded that while certification may occur prior to October 1, 2012, certified SFA's will earn the additional 6 cents for only those meals served starting October 1, 2012, or later.

Q10. Must SFAs be in compliance with both breakfast and lunch requirements to be certified for the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement?

Yes, because the HHFKA provides the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement for compliance with the updated meal patterns, SFAs must be certified by the State agency to be in compliance with the updated lunch and breakfast meal patterns (if the SFA participates in the School Breakfast Program (SBP)) in effect at the time of certification.

Q11. The meal pattern requirements are phased-in over a period of several years. How does this affect the certification process?

SFAs must demonstrate compliance with those meal pattern requirements in effect at the time the SFA applies for certification. While most of the updated lunch requirements are effective in SY 2012-2013, some lunch requirements are phased in later as are most SBP requirements. Thus, an SFA applying in SY 2012-2013 would need to demonstrate compliance with all of the SY 2012-2013 requirements in order to be certified. An SFA applying for certification in SY 2013-2014 would need to demonstrate compliance with all of the SY 2012-2013 requirements and all requirements phased in for SY 2013-2014.

Q12. Most of the new breakfast requirements do not become effective until SY 2013-2014. How does this affect 6 cents certification?

SFAs must submit certification documentation reflective of the meal pattern requirements in effect at the time they apply for certification. Therefore, if an SFA applies for certification in SY 2012-2013, they need to demonstrate compliance with the breakfast requirements in effect for SY 2012-2013. If an SFA applies for certification in SY 2013-2014, they would need to demonstrate compliance with the breakfast requirements in effect at that time.

Q13. What about SFAs that wish to adopt the new breakfast requirements in SY 2012-2013?

SFAs that have been approved by the State to adopt the breakfast requirements early must demonstrate compliance with the breakfast requirements they have been approved to adopt. Since the FNS-provided certification tool does not currently include the breakfast requirements for SY 2013-2014 or SY 2014-2015, State agencies should consult with the appropriate FNS regional office for technical assistance in certifying these SFAs on a case-by-case basis.

Q14. How many schools within the SFA must be in compliance to be certified to receive the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement?

All schools within the SFA must be in compliance with the meal pattern requirements for the SFA to be certified for the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement. If the SFA participates in the SBP, the schools must also be in compliance with the updated breakfast requirements in effect at the time of certification.

Q15. How long after documentation has been submitted by an SFA does the State agency have to make a certification determination?

Beginning October 1, 2012, State agencies must review certification materials and make certification determinations within 60 days of receipt of the certification request from the SFA. For example, if an SFA submits documentation on November 1, 2012, the State agency must make a certification determination by January 1, 2013.

Recognizing a large number of SFAs may request certification prior to October 1, 2012, an exception to the 60 day requirement is provided for any certification documentation request submitted prior to September 30, 2012. For certification requests submitted prior to October 1, 2012, the State agency has 60 days from October 1, 2012, to review certification materials and make certification determinations.

Q16. When does the 60-day timeframe begin if an SFA submits an incomplete application for certification?

The 60-day timeframe begins when the SFA first submits a complete package of certification documentation. If an application received by the State is incomplete, the State agency must notify the SFA of the additional documentation they must submit and that their application will not be considered until complete documentation is provided. State agencies should assist SFAs that are having difficulty in providing necessary documentation.

Q17. When must the State agency notify the SFA that they have submitted an incomplete application?

While there is no deadline for States to notify SFAs that their certification materials are incomplete, it would be to the State agency's advantage to notify the SFA as soon as possible so the State agency can complete the certification process quickly and because the SFA is anticipating a decision within 60 days.

Q18. Once granted certification, how do State agencies reimburse certified SFAs?

Upon certification, the State agency must reimburse the certified SFA with the additional performance-based reimbursement for each lunch served beginning the start of the month in which the certified lunches are served, but not earlier than October 1, 2012. For example, if certification documentation is submitted for October 15-19 and the SFA is certified by the State agency in December, the State agency must provide the additional performance-based reimbursement for all lunches served in that SFA on or after October 1. State agencies will follow standard reimbursement procedures.

Q19. Are SFAs new to the program required to be certified to receive the 6 cents reimbursement?

As is currently required, all new SFAs must meet the meal patterns in effect at the time the SFA enters the program. The State agency should require new SFAs to submit certification documentation prior to their participation.

While new SFAs must apply for certification prior to entering the program, they are not required to wait until they are certified by the State (which could take up to 60 days) before starting to serve meals. While they are awaiting certification, as long as the SFA has executed an agreement with the State agency, they may serve meals that meet program requirements and claim reimbursement retroactively back to the period of certification.

Certification Documentation

Q20. How does an SFA pursue certification?

There are three options for certification. These options were designed to use, to the maximum extent practicable, existing processes and information.

- Option 1 allows SFAs to submit one week of menus, detailed menu worksheets showing food components and quantities for reimbursable meals for these menus, and a nutrient analysis of calories and saturated fats. This option acknowledges that a large number of SFAs already use nutrient analysis software to monitor the nutrient levels in their meals.
- Option 2 allows SFAs to submit one week of menus, detailed menu worksheets showing food components and quantities for reimbursable meals for these menus, and a simplified nutrient assessment of calories and saturated fats. This option acknowledges that not all SFAs use nutrient analysis software. A simplified nutrient assessment is intended to be a proxy for the nutrient analysis.
- Option 3 allows State agencies to certify an SFA during a review. If the State agency offers this option, the SFA would need to have one week of menus, detailed menu worksheets for these menus, and all information needed for the State agency to conduct a nutrient analysis. *While the State is responsible for completing the nutrient analysis aspect of the certification, who completes the certification worksheets during an onsite certification is left to the discretion of the State agency. States and SFAs should communicate before the onsite certification to determine who is responsible for filling out the worksheets.*

State agencies must allow SFAs the option to choose either option 1 or 2 for certification. However, it is left to State discretion whether to make option 3 available to SFAs.

See Q. 6 for information on prototype certification tools that will be provided by FNS.

Q21. What is required of State agencies during an on-site certification (Option 3)?

State agencies must visit one school representing each menu type. For each school, a menu worksheet for one week of menus and a nutrient analysis to assess calories and saturated fat must be completed. SFAs should have information ready for the State agency to complete the certification documentation materials. [Please note: State agencies are not permitted to use the

simplified nutrient assessment when using Option 3 for certification. The simplified nutrient assessment is intended as a proxy for the full nutrient analysis, and is being allowed for SFAs in recognition of the fact that not all SFAs have nutrient analysis software.]

State agencies must also observe a meal service for each type of menu and review the production records for the observed meals to ensure they are consistent with the menus on which the certification was based and that observed meals meet the updated meal pattern requirements.

Q22. Can a State agency notify an SFA that they wish to certify them via Option 3 after the SFA has already submitted certification documentation via either Options 1 or 2?

Yes, the State agency has discretion to choose Option 3 for certification. However, if the SFA has already submitted certification documentation, the State agency has 60 days from the time of submission by the SFA to complete the on-site certification.

Q23. What documentation is required in order to be certified?

As described in Q20, the following documentation is required:

- **Menus and menu worksheets** – One week of each menu offered, by age grade group, and a detailed menu worksheet for each menu showing food components and quantities by *reimbursable meal*. For example, if the SFA serves an elementary, middle, and high school menu, the SFA must submit three menus and three menu worksheets. If an SFA has two distinct menus for its high schools, and one each for middle and elementary schools, it must submit four menus and four menu worksheets.
- **Nutrient analysis or a simplified nutrient assessment** – A nutrient analysis, using FNS-approved software, or a simplified nutrient assessment, following standards set by FNS, for each menu. The simplified nutrient assessment is considered a proxy for a complete nutrient analysis.
- **Attestation** – SFAs must attest in writing that the documentation submitted for certification is representative of the ongoing meal service within the SFA, and that the minimum required food quantities for all meal components are available to students in every serving line.

FNS issued a prototype menu worksheet and nutrient assessment in May 2012. A 4-day and 7-day version of the tool was issued on July 3, 2012. All worksheets can be found at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/nutritionstandards.htm>.

Q24. What is considered a menu?

For purposes of 6 cents certification, a menu is a descriptive list of all of the reimbursable meals offered each school week. Schools serving only one age/grade group are expected to have only one menu within each school, regardless of how many serving lines are available in the cafeteria. Additionally, an SFA with a centralized meal service may have a single menu for all schools in a particular age/grade group.

For example, an SFA that has five schools for grades 9-12, each with multiple serving lines but the same reimbursable meals offered within each school (centralized menu), the SFA would have one menu for that grade group per meal service. The SFA would fill out one corresponding menu worksheet for lunch and one for breakfast; resulting in two total worksheets. If an SFA has five

schools for grades 9-12 and each school offers different food items, this SFA has five different menus for each meal service. The SFA would submit five menus for lunch and five for breakfast, and fill out a total of ten worksheets for grades 9-12.

Q25. Can State agencies require SFAs to submit more documentation for certification than is required by FNS? For example, can a State agency require SFAs to submit production records as part of the certification process?

No, States cannot require more documentation than is required in the 6 cents interim rule. Therefore, States cannot require SFAs to submit documentation such as production records or product labels. Additionally, the State may not require the SFA to submit a different menu worksheet for every serving line in every school.

Q26. Are SFAs that serve pre-K meals required to submit documentation for pre-K meals?

No, SFAs that serve pre-K meals are not required to submit documentation for pre-K meals, but they must attest in the required attestation that the pre-K meals they serve are compliant with the current meal patterns for the age/grade groups being served. Pre-K meals currently must follow the current CACFP meal patterns, which are in the process of being updated.

Q27. Who is authorized to sign the attestation?

The signatory must be an individual who has the authority to represent the LEA on matters pertaining to the school meals program. The person(s) to whom this authority has been granted by the LEA is authorized to sign the attestation.

Q28. What menus must SFAs submit for certification?

At a minimum, SFAs must submit one week of each menu offered, by age grade group, within the SFA for both lunch and, if offered, breakfast. This means SFAs must submit a breakfast and lunch menu for grades K-5, a breakfast and lunch menu for grades 6-8 and a breakfast and lunch menu for grades 9-12.

As noted above, if the SFA serves multiple, *distinct* menus within one age grade group, the SFA must submit all menus served. For example, if the SFA has two high schools that offer lunch menus with different main dishes in their reimbursable meals, both lunch menus (and accompanying menu worksheets) must be submitted. If the SFA has two high schools that offer lunch menus with the same main dishes, but one has a salad bar and the other serves similar vegetables on the line each day, the SFA would only need to submit one of these menus and the accompanying menu worksheet. In such situations, the SFA must ensure that any menu variations not submitted for certification are consistent with the meal pattern and nutrient requirements.

For the purposes of this rule, a week means a normal school week, not including holidays.

Q29. Are there any exceptions to the 6 cents certification process for RCCIs?

While there are no exemptions or waivers for RCCIs, FNS recognizes that the 6 cents certification process may be challenging for some institutions. State agencies should provide technical assistance to RCCI to help them receive certification to receive the 6 cents reimbursement.

Q30. If a State agency develops cycle menus that are in compliance with the new meal pattern requirements, and an SFA decides to adopt those menus, what must the SFA submit for the certification process?

While SFAs would be required to submit the same certification documentation required of all SFAs, including the signed attestation that the SFA is meeting all of the meal pattern requirements, in this scenario the State agency could complete the documentation materials for the SFA (using the compliant cycle menu) and ask the SFA to identify any modifications based on what they offer.

State agencies are still required to conduct validation reviews for those SFAs that use State agency developed cycle menus selected for validation to ensure that ongoing meal service within the SFA is meeting the updated meal pattern requirements.

Q31. Must the documentation reflect any specific timeframes?

Yes, all documentation must reflect current SFA practices, i.e., meal service in the calendar month the certification materials are submitted, or in the month preceding the calendar month of submission. For example, in December an SFA can submit a request for certification with documentation of December or November meal service. Documentation for October meal service would not be considered current in this case.

As indicated in Q9, SFAs may submit planned menus prior to October 1, 2012; however menus submitted prior to October 1 must reflect meals planned for October or November 2012.

SFAs should be reminded that the materials provided are a snapshot of meal service activity and are considered representative of the on-going meal service.

Q32. SFAs currently using Nutrient Standard Menu Planning may continue with this menu planning option for breakfasts in SY 2012-2013. What must these SFAs submit for certification for breakfast?

Any SFA that uses Nutrient Standard Menu Planning for breakfasts in SY 2012-2013 must submit each distinct breakfast menu along with a nutrient analysis of saturated fat and calories using FNS approved software. No menu worksheet would be required in this case. This applies only to SFAs seeking certification in SY 2012-2013, as that is the last year that Nutrient Standard Menu Planning is allowed for breakfast.

SFAs that use food-based menu planning for breakfast in SY 2012-2013 must submit each distinct breakfast menu as well as the menu worksheet. A nutrient assessment is not required.

Q33. Must an SFA submit certification documentation if the State agency is conducting an administrative review of the SFA after July 1, 2012?

As mentioned in Q20, at State agency discretion, the State agency may certify an SFA during the course of the administrative review. Affected SFAs should work with the State agency to determine if this option is available and to identify any documentation that would need to be available to the State agency in order to complete the certification process.

States that chose to certify an SFA during an administrative review should ask for the same documentation as required in Option 3 in Q20.

Q34. When will the menu worksheet and simplified nutrient assessment tools be available to State agencies?

FNS released these tools on May 31, 2012. The tools are available on the FNS website. Although these tools are prototypes and are not required to be used by State agencies for certification, any State-developed tools used for the certification process must be pre-approved by FNS to ensure that all required elements are captured and compliance requirements are measured consistently with the FNS prototype.

State agencies wishing to create their own tools should contact their regional offices.

Q35. May SFAs use certification tools created by software companies?

Yes, SFAs may use certification tools created by software companies as long as the tool has been approved by FNS.

Q36. How must certification documentation be submitted to the State agency?

State agencies may ask SFAs to submit certification documentation in various forms including electronically or paper-based.

Q37. Can State agencies create deadlines for certification?

No, State agencies cannot create deadlines for SFA certification. State agencies should work with SFAs that are struggling to apply for certification and provide technical assistance as needed.

SY 2012-2013 Validation Reviews

Q38. What is the requirement for State agency conducted validation reviews? Does it apply beyond SY 2012-2013?

For SY 2012-2013, State agencies must conduct on-site validation reviews of 25 percent of certified SFAs. There is no validation review requirement beyond SY 2012-2013 because the new three-year administrative review cycle begins on July 1, 2013.

Q39. What is the purpose of the SY 2012-2013 validation reviews?

The purpose of the validation review is to affirm that a certified SFA has been and continues to meet the updated meal patterns from the beginning of the certification and to ensure that the meal service at the time of the validation review is consistent with the certification documentation submitted by the SFA.

Q40. What is required of a State agency during a validation review?

State agencies must observe a meal service for each type of certified menu (i.e., each distinct menu by age grade grouping) and review the production records for observed meals to ensure the meal service meets the updated meal pattern requirements and is consistent with the menus/documentation on which certification was based. In addition, State agencies must review documentation submitted for certification to ensure that ongoing meal service operations are consistent with certification documentation.

State agencies are not required to conduct a nutrient analysis during a validation review.

FNS will provide a prototype validation checklist that States can use as they conduct validation reviews.

Q41. What are State agencies to validate for breakfast during a validation review?

While SFAs that use Nutrient Standard Menu Planning for breakfast in SY 2012-2013 are not required to submit a menu worksheet for certification (refer to Q32), for validation reviews State agencies must still observe a meal service for each breakfast menu submitted and review production records for observed meals to ensure the meal service meets the breakfast requirements in SY 2012-2013 and is consistent with the documentation on which certification was based. In addition, State agencies must review documentation submitted for certification (in this case, menus and the nutrient analysis) to ensure that ongoing meal service operations are consistent with certification documentation.

For SFAs that use food-based menu planning for breakfast, State agencies would do all of the above in addition to reviewing menu worksheets to determine they reflect the current meal service in the SFA.

Q42. What action(s) must the State agency take if it is unable to validate the certification documentation?

If the State agency is unable to validate the certification documentation, the State agency must assess:

- Whether corrective action can occur immediately; and
- The longevity and severity of the problems.

If corrective action occurs immediately, the SFA may continue to earn the 6 cents. However, the State agency must recover any improperly paid 6 cents funds. The period of recovery depends on the longevity and severity of the problems discovered SFAs whose 6 cents is turned off as a result of the validation review must re-apply for certification and if they are not re-certified, will be subject to an administrative review early in the SY 2013-2014 administrative review cycle.

All the same certification process requirements apply when an SFA re-applies for certification.

Q43. When must the State agency conduct a validation review?

State agencies have discretion in scheduling validation reviews for the sample of certified SFAs. However, since an erroneous certification could lead to the recovery of improperly paid funds, State agencies are strongly encouraged to conduct validation reviews prior to the SFA's

submission of first Claim for Reimbursement including the 6 cents, if possible. State agencies could conduct the validation review prior to notifying the SFA of certification, as long as it is completed within the 60-day timeframe for certification. This approach assures proper stewardship of Federal funds.

Q44. What should a State agency do if they receive several certification requests in April or May 2013? Can the validation reviews be conducted into the next school year?

Validation reviews are a one year requirement and must be completed by June 30, 2013.

Validation reviews must occur while meal service is occurring (i.e., school is in session).

Realistically, to meet the 25 percent requirement, State agencies should plan their validation reviews for SFAs that are certified by April or May so they are able to visit the school while it is in session. After SY 2012-2013, review of meal service compliance will take place during regular administrative reviews. It is recommended that States contact SFAs in early 2013 for information regarding which SFAs are intending to apply for certification prior to the end of the school year. If the SFA does not submit the request for certification with enough time for potential validation, the SFA would be included among those SFAs scheduled for a review in the beginning of the CRE cycle the following (SY 2013-2014) year.

Q45. Are SFAs that are certified through a State agency-conducted on-site review subject to a validation review?

No, SFAs that are certified by the State agency during an on-site review are exempt from a validation review in SY 2012-2013. Since the State agency-conducted review provides an independent validation of the menus and includes a nutrient analysis, there is no further need for a validation review.

Q46. How many SFAs must a State agency select for a validation review?

State agencies must randomly select at least 25 percent of all SFAs certified in SY 2012-2013 for validation reviews, except that all large SFAs must be included in the selected sample. Note, since State agency conducted on-site reviews are not subject to validation reviews, they may not be included as part of the validation review sample.

Q47. State agencies must include all certified large SFAs in their SY 2012-2013 validation reviews. What is considered a large SFA?

A large SFA, as currently defined in §210.18 for purposes of the administrative review, includes:

- All SFAs with 40,000 or more children
- If there are less than two SFAs with 40,000 or more children, the two largest SFAs with at least 2,000 children.

Q48. At what point in the school year should State agencies select the random 25 percent of total certified SFAs that they will visit for a validation review?

State agencies should select certified SFAs for validation reviews throughout the school year because certification is a rolling process. We strongly encourage State agencies to select certified SFAs during the periods October-December, January-March, and April-June. The total number of certified SFAs selected for a validation review in SY 2012-2013 must be at least 25 percent. All validation reviews must be completed by June 30, 2013.

Any SFA not selected for a validation review during one period is automatically in the “pool” for possible selection during the next time period. Validation reviews must occur during periods when meal service is in operation so State agencies can confirm the documentation submitted reflects actual program operation.

Q49. How many individual schools within an SFA must be visited during a validation review?

One school representing each type of certified menu submitted by the SFA should be randomly selected for a validation review by the State agency. Therefore, if an SFA has three menus—one for each age grade group—the State agency would randomly select three schools to visit during the validation review, one from each age grade group. If the SFA serves breakfast, this must be observed as well.

Q50. Must a validation review be announced?

State agencies are not required to announce when they plan to conduct a validation review, though they may choose to do so.

Q51. How long must a State agency be onsite at a school during a validation review? Does the State agency have to be onsite from the beginning until the end of all meal periods?

There is no requirement for how long the State agency must stay at the school for a validation review. States must observe a meal service for each menu type and review production records for the observed meals and the other meals served during the course of the week to ensure they are consistent with the daily and weekly meal pattern requirements as well as the menus on which certification was based. In addition, State agencies must review documentation submitted for certification to ensure that ongoing meal service operations are consistent with certification documentation.

FNS will provide State agencies with a prototype checklist for validation reviews.

Administrative Reviews

Q52. Are State agencies required to conduct administrative reviews in SY 2012-2013?

Generally, no. State agency administrative reviews scheduled for SY 2012-2013 may be postponed until SY 2013-2014, the first year of the new three-year administrative review cycle. Postponing administrative reviews is expected to allow State agencies to focus on the implementation of the updated meal patterns and certification activities. However, State agencies must continue to conduct Additional Administrative Reviews (AARs) in SY 2012-2013 since these SFAs are high risk. In addition, State agencies must conduct administrative reviews for other SFAs that are considered at-risk for improper payments.

Q53. If a State agency has an AAR planned in SY 2012-2013, can they do a validation review during this time as well?

Yes, a State agency can conduct an AAR and validation review in the same on-site visit.

Q54. How are State agencies to handle monitoring the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) for SFAs that are scheduled for an administrative review in SY 2012-2013?

For SY 2012-2013, any time the State agency is on-site at an SFA that operates the SSO, the State agency should select a school within the SFA to review for SSO. SFAs scheduled for an administrative review in SY 2012-2013 but are postponed, will be reviewed during SY 2013-2014. Reviews of SSO schools will occur at that time.

Q55. Which SFAs must the State agency review in SY 2013-2014, the first year of the new three-year administrative review cycle?

The first year of the new review cycle (SY 2013-2014) must include any SFA scheduled for review in SY 2012-2013 whose review was postponed. In addition, State agencies are required to conduct an administrative review of non-compliant SFAs early in the review cycle, i.e., any SFA whose certification request was denied during the certification process or upon a validation review for significant meal pattern violations or any SFA that has not applied for certification.

Q56. How should State agencies handle SFAs that fail to apply for certification?

State agencies should work with and provide technical assistance to SFAs that are having trouble applying for certification in SY 2012-2013. SFAs that do not apply for certification will not be eligible to receive the 6 cents and must be reviewed early in the new three-year administrative review process. If the SFA is not in compliance with the updated meal patterns for breakfasts and lunches at that time, all standard corrective action, follow-up review and fiscal action requirements apply. In addition, these SFAs remain ineligible for the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement.

Q57. How should State agencies handle SFAs who apply for certification but repeatedly fail to meet the new meal pattern requirements?

The State agency should assess the reasons for non-compliance on a case by case basis. State agencies have a number of tools to deal with non-compliance ranging from technical assistance, corrective action, follow up reviews, and fiscal action resulting from administrative review activity, to withholding reimbursement and ultimately termination.

Q58. If during an *administrative review* a certified SFA is found to be out of compliance with either lunch or breakfast requirements, will the 6 cents per lunch be “turned off”?

If the SFA does not meet the lunch requirements, the 6 cents per lunch will be terminated and the State agency would pursue corrective action, follow up review activity and fiscal action as required under 7 CFR 210.18.

If an SFA is found out of compliance with only the breakfast requirements during an administrative review, the State agency would pursue corrective action, follow-up review activity, and fiscal action as required under 7 CFR 210.18; however, in this case the SFA remains eligible for the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement.

Q59. When is the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement for lunch turned off?

If the State agency finds during an administrative review that the certified SFA has violated any requirement of Performance Standard 2 for lunch, the State agency must assess:

- Whether corrective action can occur immediately; and

- The longevity and severity of the problems.

If corrective action occurs immediately, the SFA may continue to earn the 6 cents. However, the State agency must recover any improperly paid funds. The period of recovery depends on the longevity and severity of the problems discovered.

Q60. If the State agency determines during an administrative review that recovery of the 6 cents is necessary, must the State recover the 6 cents from all schools within the SFA or just the school where the violation was observed?

Recovery of the 6 cents is at the discretion of the State agency and may be applied only to the school(s) in which the meal pattern violations are observed, or to all schools in the SFA depending on the nature of the violation and the documentation available to the State agency.

Q61. If during an administrative review the State agency finds a problem that is able to be corrected immediately, must the 6 cents be turned off?

No, if the SFA is able to correct the identified problem by the end of the week in which the review is conducted, the State agency need not turn off the 6 cents reimbursement. For example, if the school is missing a vegetable subgroup during the review week and is able to change its food order to include the missing vegetable subgroup so the component is included on menus for that week or the next week, then the SFA would not lose the 6 cents reimbursement in the following month.

Q62. When is the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement “turned back on”?

The State agency may re-start the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement beginning with the first full month the SFA demonstrates to the satisfaction of the State agency that it has corrected the violation identified during the administrative review.

Q63. Will the “turn on” of 6 cents after non-compliance has been corrected require a State agency on-site review?

No, an onsite review is not required, as long as the State agency has sufficient documentation that the SFA is compliant with the new meal pattern requirements. As always, State agencies have discretion to do onsite reviews if they wish.

Reporting

Q64. What are the reporting requirements associated with the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement?

State agencies must include the meal counts earning performance-based reimbursement on the FNS-10 and the funds on the FNS-777 quarterly report.

State agencies must also submit an additional quarterly report detailing the disbursement of 6 cents per lunch reimbursement, including:

- Total number of SFAs in the State;
- Names and locations of certified SFAs; and
- For each SFA, the total number of lunches earning the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement for each month.

FNS is currently updating the FNS-10 and creating a prototype quarterly report for State agencies. State agencies should keep in mind that because funds are not available until October 1, 2012, the first reporting on the FNS-10 will occur in November 2012. The first required quarterly report would not be due until January 2013.

Q65. Are there any other reporting requirements?

SFAs certified to receive the 6 cents per lunch reimbursement are required to annually attest to compliance with the meal pattern requirements, as new requirements are phased in each year after their certification. Subsequent to the initial attestation at the time of certification, an annual attestation is required for subsequent years ending after SY 2014-2015, to acknowledge compliance with new phased in meal pattern requirements. The attestation must be provided to the State agency as an addendum to the written agreement.

Appeals

Q66. Can an SFA appeal a State agency denial of certification?

No, an SFA cannot appeal a State agency denial of certification since the SFA has not been deemed eligible to receive the additional reimbursement. While the SFA does not have appeal rights in this situation, the State agency should provide technical assistance to the SFA to assist them getting certified.

Q67. Can an SFA appeal a State agency turn off of the 6 cents reimbursement as a result of an administrative review?

Yes, an SFA can appeal the State agency turn off of the 6 cents reimbursement. In this scenario the State agency has made payments to the SFA and therefore the SFA can appeal the decision. Standard appeal procedures must be followed.

Directions for Menu Worksheet

Welcome to the FNS Menu Worksheet, a tool designed to assist School Food Authorities (SFAs) in demonstrating that each of the menus meets the new meal pattern for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

General Information:

- Six cents certification is district- based, and all menu types within the district must be submitted for certification. Individual schools may *not* apply for six cents reimbursement.
- Every unique breakfast and lunch menu type offered must be entered into the worksheet, using a new worksheet for each menu.
- Menu type examples: Grade K-5 breakfast, K-5 lunch, Grade 6-8 breakfast, etc. USDA is providing a total of 8 different menu worksheets (4 for lunch, 4 for breakfast).
- Refer to FNS memorandum SP-31-2012 for detailed information on *distinct menus*.
- *This worksheet does NOT assess compliance on a per-serving line basis- all reimbursable meals must be entered in one worksheet (one menu type). Separate from the menu worksheet, SFAs must sign an attestation stating each serving line is in compliance with the meal pattern.*
- Worksheet is programmed based on a 5-day school week. A 7-day worksheet is also available on the USDA website. SFAs should contact their State agency for an alternate worksheet if operating on an alternate schedule on a regular basis (SFAs should NOT submit a menu worksheet for a holiday week as this does not represent the typical week of meals).
- Certification is based on *offered* menus- do not consider Offer versus Serve options. Report the full offering of fruits and vegetables on the menu, NOT what a child typically selects. The worksheet is not weighted.

****For Breakfast, follow instructions that follow below for Lunch.*

- However, there are no new requirements for breakfast in SY 2012-13 (except milk content/variety). Therefore, existing requirements for four components (Grains, Meat/Meat Alternates, Fruits/Vegetables, and Milk) are assessed. For early implementation, contact your State Agency for further instructions.
- DISREGARD instructions related to whole grain-rich grains, grain-based desserts, fruit and vegetable juice, and vegetable subgroups.

Special Considerations

-Some vegetables and fruits do not credit on a volume as served basis (i.e. 1 cup credits as 1 cup).

-Dried fruit- twice the volume as served

-Raw leafy greens- half the volume as served

-Tomato paste- refer to manufacturer information (typically twice volume served)

-Conversion *must be made first*, and CREDITABLE amounts entered into the certification worksheet. A yellow warning box appears when leafy greens or tomato paste is selected from the vegetable subgroups list, reminding users to enter creditable amounts.

Example:

Menu: Salad with 2 cups of romaine lettuce

Report: Select “1” cup of vegetable (dark green) from drop-down box

-To ensure data entered is not lost, remember to save the information periodically.

Getting Started:

Materials needed:

-1 week menu (5 days)

-Portion sizes for all reimbursable menu items

-Contribution information for each menu item (CN Labels, [USDA Foods Fact Sheets](#))

-Standardized Recipes

-Production Records

- [Food Buying Guide](#)

- [Food Buying Guide Calculator](#)

- [CNPP Vegetable Subgroups List](#) (page 5)

-At a minimum, complete a separate Certification worksheet for each of the three grade groups (K-5, 6-8 and 9-12). A separate Certification worksheet has been developed for breakfast and lunch. There is also a K-8 worksheet available if a single menu is used, as well as a 7-day menu for each grade group.

-An SFA submits menu worksheets for each distinct menu for both breakfast and lunch.

-If there is more than one menu type per grade group, SFAs must submit a different worksheet for each menu type. For example, if there are two different elementary school menus, two K-5 worksheets are required.

-If multiple schools within the same grade group are served by a single menu, only *one* worksheet is required.

-Menu worksheets should be sent to the State Agency for review and final approval.

Menu Worksheet Orientation

-Open the Excel file corresponding to the appropriate grade group and menu. Example instructions here are based on Grade 9-12 Lunch.

-Each Excel file has twelve tabs located at the bottom of the spreadsheet, including the Simplified Nutrient Assessment (optional).

-Each tab is labeled with the following titles:

-*Menu Worksheet Instructions*: quick review of the worksheet instructions. On the other tabs (All Meals, Monday, etc) there are hyperlinks labeled “Go to Instructions” that will take the user back to this tab

-*SFA Notes*: blank text box for SFA to enter comments for State Agency reviewers

-*All Meals*: first tab requiring data entry

-*Optional VegBar*: to report daily offerings from a vegetable/salad/garden bar

-*Monday*: to report meals and vegetable subgroups offered this day

-*Tuesday*: as above

-*Wednesday*: as above

-*Thursday*: as above

-*Friday*: as above

-*Weekly Report*: results of weekly meal pattern requirement check

-*Nutrient Instructions (optional)*: for Simplified Nutrient Assessment; see separate instructions document

-*Nutrient Assessment (optional)*: for Simplified Nutrient Assessment

- Click on the tab at the bottom of the spreadsheet to transfer to a different tab.

-Directions below begin with the “All Meals” spreadsheet, which requires the bulk of information input.

***Follow these steps in order for accurate results. Accuracy of menu certification results are based on accuracy of information entered.

“SFA Notes” tab

-Clicking on the text box inside this tab allows SFAs opportunity to submit comments to the State agency during certification reviews.

“All Meals” Tab

-Title of this worksheet indicates meal period (Breakfast or Lunch) and grade group. *Ensure the correct version of the Certification worksheet is used for the menu.*

-Enter the SFA name and menu number (for SFAs with multiple menus within a single grade group). If only one menu per grade group, type “1.”

-Column 1 lists Meal Names (all meals offered across the week).

-Other columns list various food components within the meal pattern- Meat/Meat Alternate (column 2), Grains (3), Whole grain-rich Grains (3a), Grain-based Desserts (3b), Fruit (4), Fruit Juice (4a), Vegetables (5), Vegetable Juice (5a), and Fluid Milk (6).

-Food component columns also list appropriate units of measure (ounce equivalents, cups, etc).

-Components are color-coded (e.g. Fruit and Fruit juice = purple) throughout worksheet.

-Just above columns 1 and 3 is a hyperlink to the Food Buying Guide Calculator, above columns 3a and 3b is a hyperlink to the Menu Worksheet Instructions tab, and above columns 4a and 5 is a hyperlink to the Weekly Report tab.

-At the far right of the screen the section “Optional Tools to Assist in Fraction and Decimal Calculations” can assist SFAs in adding fractions and converting between decimals and fractions.

Column 1: Meal Name

***IMPORTANT: For this *menu worksheet only*, SFAs must list *reimbursable meals offered* on the menu. Each reimbursable meal consists of all required food components: any grain/meat/meat alternates in a main and/or side dish, total amount of fruit offered with this meal, total amount of vegetables in a main and/or side dish, and amount of milk.

-All *unique* reimbursable meals offered over the course of the entire week must be entered- one meal per row of the worksheet. If the same main dish is offered with the same quantity of vegetables, fruit and milk is available every day, enter it only once (if *types* of fruits, vegetables, or milk change, still enter on only one row).

Meal Name Example 1:

Meal offered Monday: Tuna sandwich, ½ cup corn, ½ cup carrots, 1 cup peaches, fat-free milk

Meal offered Wednesday: Tuna sandwich, 1 cup green salad, 1 cup apples, fat-free flavored milk

Result: Enter “Tuna sandwich” **once** in Column 1, with 1 cup vegetables, 1 cup fruit, 1 cup milk

-However, if the same main dish is offered with *different* quantities of fruits or vegetables, it must be entered as two separate entries in Column 1 (two rows).

Meal Name Example 2:

Meal offered Monday: Tuna sandwich, ½ cup corn, ½ cup carrots, 1 cup peaches, fat-free milk

Meal offered Wednesday: Tuna sandwich, ½ cup green salad, 1 cup apples, fat-free flavored milk

Result: Enter “Tuna sandwich with 1 cup veggies,” with 1 cup vegetables, 1 cup fruit, 1 cup milk AND enter “Tuna sandwich with ½ cup veggies,” with ½ cup vegetables, 1 cup fruit, 1 cup milk

-Vegetable subgroups and *types* of milk will be recorded on a different tab.

- Type name of complete reimbursable meal. To assist the State reviewer, enter the name of the main dish to match the menu submitted for certification. (e.g. if vegetable pizza is called “Garden Power Flatbread,” type “Garden Power Flatbread” into worksheet).

Meal Name Example 3:

Meal #1:

Chicken Nuggets (5 pieces) – 3oz meat, no creditable breading

WW Roll – 2oz grain (WGR)

Honey Sauce – 2 TBSP

Mixed Fruit Cup – ½ cup

100% Orange Juice – 4 oz

Steamed Broccoli – ½ cup

Baby Carrots – ½ cup

Milk – 8 oz

Result: Enter “Chicken nuggets w/honey sauce and roll” in column 1 (NOT all components)

- Note: worksheet example meal, “Chicken Nuggets,” DOES NOT add to daily or weekly totals.

-For items incorrectly entered in the Meal Name column, click the box and select backspace to clear all text from the box.

Entering Meal Components into the “All Meals” Spreadsheet

-Once the meal name for Meal #1 has been entered, the meal components and corresponding serving sizes must be entered.

-NOTE: For all drop-down menus in the following sections, to “clear out” an erroneous selection, click on the box with the incorrect data, scroll UP to the empty space option (just above 1/8) and select. This will clear out any information from the drop-down box.

Column 2: Meat/Meat Alternate (ounce equivalents)

- Enter amount of meat/meat alternates offered in the entrée and/or side dishes in ounce equivalents (to the nearest quarter ounce).

- Do NOT enter text (such as “4 oz”)- this will result in an error message.

Column 3: Total Grains (ounce equivalents or grain/bread servings)

-Enter amount of grains in the reimbursable meal. Include ALL whole-grain rich grains, non-whole grain-rich grains, AND grain-based desserts here.

-Because there is wide variation in serving sizes, type in the correct serving sizes.

-All grains are measured in either ounce equivalents or grain/bread servings and must be *rounded down to the nearest quarter*. Make this calculation prior to entering in worksheet. The worksheet also makes this adjustment automatically.

-In SY 2012-13, SFAs may use ounce equivalents (based on 16 gram creditable grain) OR grain/bread serving (based on 14.75 grams) OR a combination. For SY 2012-13, consider 1 grain/bread serving = 1 ounce equivalent and add together (conversions to oz eq not required).

Grains Example 1:

Entered: Total grains = “1.7”

Result: Worksheet rounds to “1.5”

Grains Example 2:

Meal offers 1 slice bread (1 grain/bread serving) and 0.5 oz eq whole grain-rich cookie

Result: 1 grain/bread + 0.5 oz eq = 1.5 (enter into column 3)

-Do NOT enter text (such as “4 oz”)- this will result in an error message.

-Consider grains in the main dish (bun, breading, pasta), side dishes (i.e. rice, breadstick), and any other additional grains available to the student such as sliced bread and/or desserts.

-Breading *may* be credited in SY 2012-13, but is not required (refer to [SP 30-2012](#)).

- All grains in the meal MUST be included in this column; non-credited extras not allowable.

Column 3a: Whole Grain-Rich Grains (ounce equivalents or grain/bread servings)

-Enter quantity of whole grain-rich grains contained in meal (Meal #1). Report in *ounce equivalents* (e.g. 1.25 oz eq roll) OR grain/bread servings (e.g. roll with 1.25 grain/bread equivalents).

-If no whole grain-rich grains in this meal, either leave cell blank or type in zero (“0”)

Grains Example 3:

Meal offers 1 slice enriched bread (1 grain/bread serving) and 0.5 oz eq whole grain-rich cookie
Result: 0.5 oz eq whole grain-rich grains (enter “0.5” into column 3a)

Column 3b: Grain-Based Desserts (ounce equivalents or grain/bread servings)

- Enter quantity of grain-based desserts offered in meal (Meal #1). Report in *ounce equivalents* (e.g. 0.5 oz eq cookie) OR grain/bread servings (e.g. cookie with 0.75 grain/bread).

-If no grain-based desserts in this meal, either leave cell blank or type in zero (“0”).

Grains Example 4:

Meal offers 1 slice enriched bread (1 grain/bread serving) and 0.5 oz eq whole grain-rich cookie
Result: 0.5 oz eq grain-based dessert (enter “0.5” into column 3b)

Column 4: Total Fruit (cups)

-Use drop down menu to enter total quantity of fruit offered with this meal. Options range from 1/8 cup (smallest creditable amount) to 2 cups.

-Total fruit includes *both* fruit pieces and fruit juice.

-Crediting calculation for dried fruit must be done PRIOR to entering fruit quantities in worksheet- enter only CREDITABLE amounts.

Fruit Example 1:

Meal offers ½ cup mixed fruit and 4 oz (1/2 cup) 100% orange juice
Result: ½ cup fruit + ½ cup juice = 1 cup fruit (select “1” in column 4)

Fruit Example 2:

Meal offers ¼ cup of boxed raisins
Result: ¼ cup raisins = ½ cup fruit (select “½” in column 4)

Column 4a: Fruit Juice (cups)

- Use drop down menu to enter quantity of full-strength, 100% fruit juice offered with this meal. Options range from 1/8 cup (smallest creditable amount) to 2 cups.
- Juice is also included in Column 4, but NOT added with Column 4a (no double-counting).
- If no fruit juice offered in this meal, leave drop-down box blank.

Column 5: Vegetables (cups)

- Use drop down menu to enter total quantity of vegetables offered with this meal. Options range from 1/8 cup (smallest creditable amount) to 2 cups. If more than 2 cups of vegetables are offered in this meal, report 2 cups.
- Total vegetables include *both* vegetable pieces and vegetable juice.
- Do not consider vegetable subgroups; report total amounts of vegetables offered with meal.
- If several vegetable choices are offered, report what the child is able to **take**.

Vegetable Example 1:

Meal offers 4 vegetable choices (each 1/2 cup), students instructed to “Choose two”

Result: Report amount of vegetables when child takes two choices (enter “1” in column 5)

Vegetable Example 2:

Meal offers spinach pizza (1/4 cup spinach) and side of carrots (1/2 cup).

Result: Add vegetable offerings together (1/4 cup plus 1/2 cup = 3/4 cup, select “3/4” in column 5).

-REMINDER: Conversion *must be made first*, and CREDITABLE amounts entered into the certification worksheet. A yellow warning box appears when leafy greens or tomato paste is selected from the vegetable subgroups list, reminding users to enter creditable amounts.

Column 5a: Vegetable Juice (cups)

- Use drop down menu to enter quantity of full-strength, 100% vegetable juice offered with this meal. Options range from 1/8 cup (smallest creditable amount) to 2 cups.
- Juice is also included in Column 5, but NOT added with Column 5a (no double-counting).
- If no vegetable juice offered in this meal, leave drop-down box blank.

Column 6: Milk (cups)

- Enter amount of milk offered. Report in *cups*- not ounces. If ounces are entered (e.g. “8”), a warning prompt pops up to check if value is accurate.

-Information entry for Meal #1 is now complete. Repeat Step 5 for all reimbursable meals available within the 5-day week.

-There is space for up to 50 meals offered in a week-contact the State for an alternate (expanded) form if needed.

Optional Vegetable Bar Tab

-Use this tab **ONLY** if there is a vegetable bar offered for the week with the **SAME** vegetable subgroup offerings multiple times over the week.

-Vegetable bar must be accessible to **ALL** students for the days in which it is offered.

-Select the name and quantity of each vegetable offered on the vegetable bar in the appropriate subgroup. *The quantity is the planned offering amount for each student.*

-Menu planners must predetermine what the offered amount is- options for implementing this include pre-portioning, signage encouraging students to “select 3,” etc. Offered amounts may also be based on historical daily disappearance data.

-“Unlimited” portions cannot be assessed for component and nutrient requirements

-For full instructions on reporting of vegetables by subgroup, refer to Vegetable Subgroup Reporting section within the **MONDAY** Tab instructions.

-At the far right of the screen the section “Optional Tools to Assist in Fraction and Decimal Calculations” can assist SFAs in adding fractions and converting between decimals and fractions.

-If a vegetable bar is offered as an entire reimbursable meal (contains grains, meat/meat alternates, and fruit), enter this meal in the “All Meals” tab, naming it something similar to “Salad Bar Meal” and listing the food component contributions.

MONDAY Tab

-Using the drop-down boxes in the “Meal Name” column, click on meals offered on MONDAY (one meal per row). If 10 meals are offered, there should be 10 rows of information filled in.

-The new school meal pattern requires that for schools with multiple serving lines, all lines meet the daily and weekly meal pattern requirements. However, this worksheet does NOT assess compliance on a per-serving line basis- all reimbursable meals must be entered in one worksheet (one menu type). Separate from the menu worksheet, SFAs must sign an attestation stating each serving line is in compliance with the meal pattern.

-Therefore, list all meals available to a child, on any line on any given day.

-To remove a meal selected in error: click on the box, scroll up to the very top, and select the empty space option. This will clear out all information for that specific row.

- Enter up to 20 meals offered per day- if more than 20 meals are offered per day, contact the State Agency for an expanded version of this worksheet.

-Once the meal is selected, other columns within that row automatically fill in from data previously entered in the “All Meals” tab.

Meat/Meat Alternate, Grain, Fruit, and Vegetable Component Check

-Columns are color-coded, matching columns in the “All Meals” tab. The first column shown (in blue) is “Meat/Meat Alternate.” There are two columns for this component.

-The first column shows the quantity of the component, previously typed in.

-The second column for meat/meat alternate, colored yellow, calculates if the meal selected meets the daily requirement this component.

Component Check Example:

Offered meal is for lunch in grades 9-12 and daily meat/meat alternate requirement = 2 oz eq.

In “All Meals” tab, user typed in Chicken Nuggets w/ honey sauce (3 oz eq meat)

Result: “Daily M/MA Requirement Check 2 oz eq” column turns green and reads “Yes”

-If the entered quantity does not meet the daily minimum, the Requirement Check column turns red and reads “No.”

-The same applies to all other components- Grains, Fruit, Vegetables, and Milk. There is NOT a daily check for whole grain-rich grains, grain-based desserts, or juices.

-Once all meals offered on Monday have been added, the worksheet will report if each meal meets all DAILY requirements. Weekly requirement assessment is carried out in a future step.

Milk Component Check

- Scroll to the right side of the screen to the “Milk Type” table (colored brown).
- Click the small checkbox next to each type of milk offered on Mondays. Check one or more boxes. When finished, the yellow column in this section turns green (Yes) or red (No).

Vegetable Subgroup Reporting

-The final step for MONDAY is reporting vegetable subgroups offered. Scroll to the right until the “Creditable Amount of Each Vegetable Subgroup Offered on Monday” table is viewable.

***If a salad/veg bar is offered this day, select the check box in this section to indicate this!

-Beginning with “Dark Green” (first green column), click the *first* drop-down box to select the LARGEST amount of dark green vegetables offered to any one student.

-Leave this column blank if dark green vegetables are not offered.

Vegetable Subgroup Example 1:

Monday menu offers a spinach pizza (¼ cup spinach) and a side of broccoli (½ cup broccoli)

Child has opportunity to select pizza and broccoli

Result: Add amount of spinach and broccoli (¾ cup dark green) = select ¾ in first drop down box

(Largest amount of dark green vegetables a student can select.)

-If two items are offered and child can NOT select both, do NOT add amounts of spinach and broccoli together. The student cannot take both of those food items. This also applies if more than one side dish with dark green vegetables is offered and students are instructed to take one choice. ***Accuracy in the “largest amount” box is critical- it determines the weekly subgroup offerings and if requirements are met.

Vegetable Subgroup Example 2:

Menu offers a spinach pizza (¼ cup spinach) and a broccoli soufflé (½ cup broccoli)

Child has opportunity to select pizza or soufflé

Result: Do NOT add amount of spinach and broccoli. Largest amount offered = ½ cup

-Below this section, use drop-down boxes to select both *names* of dark green vegetables and the *quantity* (in cups, ranging from 1/8 to 2).

- Once dark green vegetables have been entered, the same process must be repeated for each of the other four subgroups (Red/Orange, Beans/Peas, Starchy and Other).

- Many vegetables have been entered into subgroup lists, but these lists are *not* comprehensive.
- If an offered vegetable is unlisted, scroll to the bottom of the list and select “unspecified.”
- Next, enter the name of the vegetable in the text box at the bottom of the screen.
- Use resources such as MyPlate and Food Buying Guide (links below), as well as State Agencies, for classifications.

Vegetable Subgroup Example 3:

Menu offers yellow peppers

Yellow peppers = Other vegetable, not listed in drop down menu

Result: Under Other vegetables list, click “Other unspecified.” Within the “Unspecified Other Vegetables” box, type in “yellow peppers.”

- Once all vegetable subgroups are entered for MONDAY, select the “TUESDAY” tab.

TUESDAY- FRIDAY Tabs

- Repeat steps taken in MONDAY tab for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday tabs.

Weekly Report

- This tab compiles all daily and weekly information to check if all requirements have been met.
- There are columns for Monday-Friday, Weekly Total, Weekly Requirement (cups or oz eq), and Weekly Requirement Check
- On the left side of the sheet, in rows, are the food components. The Monday-Friday columns show the amount of each component entered each day of the week.
- The Weekly Total, a light gray color, lists the amount of the component offered over the entire 5-day week. To the right is the Weekly Requirement, a beige-yellow color.
- The Weekly Requirement Check becomes green (Yes) if the requirement was met, and red (No) if not met.
- This tab also assesses the weekly requirement for fruit juice and vegetable juice (no more than half of the weekly offering in the form of juice), grain-based dessert (2 or fewer ounce equivalents/bread servings), and whole grain-rich grains (at least half of the grain offerings are whole grain-rich).
- For Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates, the daily minimum and maximum offerings each day are shown. These are added together to report total weekly minimum and maximum grains offered.

Nutrient Instructions/Simplified Nutrient Assessment (OPTIONAL)

-For SFAs choosing to use the Simplified Nutrient Assessment, refer to separate document entitled “Nutrient Assessment Directions.”

Frequently Asked Questions

How often will SFAs be required to submit menus for certification?

This is a one-time process. The only time an SFA will resubmit (with revisions) is if an SFA is denied certification after initial submission.

How long is the certification?

Permanent; no expiration date. SFAs will be assessed for ongoing compliance with the meal pattern through administrative reviews.

Is there a minimum amount of days required?

A 5-day week’s worth of menus must be entered. If an SFA regularly operates on a shorter or longer week, contact the State Agency for assistance.

How is the week selected for review?

The SFA has the discretion to select any week for certification.

On average, what is the estimated time this process will take per site entered?

It is highly variable, depending on how complex the menu is, but testing estimates ranged from as little as 1 hour per menu to over three hours. The majority of the time investment occurs with obtaining information on crediting and portion sizes for all items offered on the menu. The data input takes far less time.

How do I show an optional grain offering on this worksheet?

All grains must be counted toward daily and weekly requirements, therefore even optional grains must be included with the meal. However, if a menu is designed so that a child has the option to take an additional grain offering, such as a dinner roll, SFAs must enter TWO rows in the All Meals tab, and list both meals on the day this option is offered.

Example: Spaghetti w/sauce and roll (3 oz eq grains)

Spaghetti w/sauce, no roll (2 oz eq grains)

One Week Sample Menu

Monday

2 ounces roast pork (USDA Food #A672)

1 cup steamed brown rice (2 oz eq WGR Grains) [USDA Food #100499/B545]

1 cup USDA Recipe I-13 – Orange Glazed Sweet Potatoes (1 cup R/O veg)

1 cup grapes

1 cup 1% milk or 1 cup non-fat milk

Tuesday

1 cup USDA Recipe D-22 – Ground Beef & Macaroni (2.5 oz M/MA, ¼ cup R/O veg, 1/8 cup other veg, 1 oz eq Grains – non WGR)

1 (1 oz) whole wheat roll (1 oz eq WGR Grains)

1 teaspoon margarine (regular 80% fat)

½ cup steamed fresh zucchini (1/2 cup other veg)

1 banana – medium (1/2 cup fruit)

1 portion USDA Recipe C-01–Apple Cobbler–(1/2 cup fruit and 1 oz eq Grains) – Non-WGR

1 cup 1% milk or 1 cup nonfat milk

Wednesday

½ cup USDA Recipe E-05 – Chicken Salad (2 oz M/MA) with

2 slices whole wheat bread (2 oz eq WGR Grains)

1 cup fresh steamed broccoli and cauliflower (1/2 cup other veg, ½ cup dark green veg)

1 cup fresh strawberries, sliced (1 cup fruit)

1 cup 1% milk or 1 cup non-fat milk

Thursday

- 1 portion (73 grams) USDA Recipe D-46 – Baked Cajun Fish (2 oz M/MA)
- 2.0 pieces USDA Recipe B-09 – Cornbread (2oz WGR) [modified USDA Recipe to ww flour/whole grain cornmeal]
- 1 teaspoon margarine (regular 80%)
- 2/3 cup USDA Recipe I-06 – Baked Beans (1/2 cup legume veg)
- 1 cup romaine salad (1/2 cup green veg) with
- 2 tablespoons USDA Recipe E-15 – Italian Dressing
- 1 cup canned apricot halves in light syrup (1 cup fruit)
- 1 cup 1% milk or 1 cup nonfat milk

Friday

- 1 slice cheese pizza with whole grain crust – 1 slice = 131.8 grams – (2 oz M/MA, 2 oz eq WGR Grains, 1/8 cup other veg)
- ½ cup oven baked potato wedges (1/2 cup starchy veg) [USDA Food A174]
- ½ cup cherry tomatoes (1/2 cup R/O veg) with
- 2 tablespoons USDA Recipe E-13 – Creamy Dip for Vegetables
- 1 cup peach slices – light syrup (USDA Food #A409)
- 1 cup 1% milk or 1 cup nonfat milk

Disclaimer: This menu does not actually meet all of the requirements for the 9-12 grade group. This was done intentionally to show how the spreadsheet provides warnings to the user. This is just a sample menu that MDE has used to complete a sample of the certification tool worksheet for the grade group 9-12.

Simplified Nutrient Assessment- OPTIONAL

-SFAs have the option of choosing to use the FNS Simplified Nutrient Assessment (SNA) for 6 cents certification (instead of a full nutrient analysis).

-The instructions for the SNA and the actual assessment are located in the final 2 tabs, after the Weekly Report for the menu worksheet.

-Nutrient Instructions provide a snapshot of the complete directions listed here.

Key Information:

-Only **average daily calories** and **% of calories from saturated fat** must be assessed.

-Estimates for calorie or saturated fat information for milk, fruits, or vegetables are pre-programmed.

-SFAs must provide calorie and saturated fat information for all main dish items, side items with grains and/or meat/meat alternates, desserts and condiments. Information can be collected from nutrition labels and product specifications.

-Scratch recipes should be standardized. Sources such as nutrient analysis software products or web-based tools (e.g. CNPP SuperTracker) can be used to determine calories and saturated fat for standardized recipes. SFAs are encouraged to contact their State Agencies for other potential sources for recipe analysis.

-SFAs that have nutrient analysis software may still choose the FNS simplified assessment option if desired, but are encouraged to use their existing software.

-Hyperlinks to instructions and tools available throughout the SNA. Locations listed below.

Calories/Sugars and Fat sources typically added to Vegetables or Fruits:

Common Sources of Added Sugars:

BBQ sauce
Brown or white sugar
Honey or honey mustard
Marshmallows
Maple, chocolate and/or fruit syrup
Icing

Common Sources of Added Fats:

Butter
Margarine
Vegetable oils
Salad dressing
Mayonnaise
Cream/whipped cream/sour cream

Fruit, Milk, and Vegetable Subgroup Simplified Nutrient Selection

-At top of this section, a hyperlink labeled “Go to Instructions” takes users to key instructions.

Fruit

-Average serving size and total weekly servings already calculated from earlier data entered.

-Select the two buttons that best apply to fruit offerings within the 5-day menu entered for the menu worksheet- the percentage of offerings containing added fat and/or added sugar. Include fats and sugars used during preparation of the food as well as any additional fats and/or sugars accompanying the component.

-Default option is “Fruit not offered.”

-Only ONE selection can be made for added sugar, and ONE selection for added fat. Refer to the above list of commonly added ingredients to fruits for assistance. Select the *best choice*.

-Estimates are based on average/typical use of fat and sugar in fruit offerings. Fruits served as part of a grain-based dessert, or with significant (more than 2 teaspoons/cup) added fat and/or sugar may be listed in column O1 (“Dessert, Side or Condiment”) to report, along with total planned servings within the week, exact calorie and saturated fat values.

Fruit Example 1:

5 cups of fruit offered over the week

(2 cups canned in light syrup, 3 cups fresh/plain fruit)

Result: Fruit offered with added sugar 40% of the time (2 divided by 5; select “30% to 70% of the total fruit offerings)

Result: Fruit offered with added fat 0% of the time (0 divided by 5; select “less than 30% of the total fruit offerings”)

Fruit Example 2:

5 cups of fruit offered over the week

(1 cup canned in light syrup, 1 cup w/sweetened nuts, ½ cup w/crumb topping, 2 ½ cups plain)

Result: Fruit offered with added sugar 50% of the time (2 ½ cups divided by 5 cups; select “30% to 70% of the total fruit offerings)

Result: Fruit offered with added fat 30% of the time (1 ½ cups divided by 5 cups; select “30% to 70% of the total fruit offerings)

Milk

-Average serving size and total weekly servings already calculated from earlier data entered.

-Select the button describing which **two** milk offerings are *most frequently served* this week. Only ONE selection can be made- refer to historical usage, inventory records, etc. and select the *best choice*. Default option is “Milk not offered.”

-Estimates based on average usage of standard commercial products. Milk offerings with a unique nutrient profile (e.g. reduced sugar flavored milk) may be listed in column O1 (“Dessert, Side or Condiment”) to report, along with total planned servings within the week, exact calorie and saturated fat values.

Milk Example:

5 cups of milk offered over the week

Nonfat unflavored and lowfat unflavored milk daily, chocolate nonfat milk offered Fridays only.

Using inventory, offered 450 nonfat unflavored, 450 lowfat unflavored, 100 chocolate nonfat

Result: SFA would select the “nonfat unflavored & low-fat (1%) unflavored” option.

Vegetable Subgroups (colored by subgroup)

-Each of the vegetable subgroups also has a selection chart. The first is Dark Green Vegetables.

-This box has already calculated the share of dark green vegetables a child is offered based on the total volume of vegetables offered over the 5-day week menu from earlier data entered.

-Select the button that *best* describes added fat in offered dark green vegetables. The default option is “Dark green vegetables not offered.” Only ONE selection can be made- refer to the above list of common added ingredients to vegetables and select the *best choice*.

-Proceed with all remaining subgroups, following the same steps described above.

- For Red/Orange only, select both an added fat option and an added sugar option.

Vegetable Example 1:

2 creditable cups of dark green vegetables offered

(1 cup raw spinach for a salad and 1 cup as broccoli with cheese sauce)

Result: Dark green vegetables offered with added fat 50% of the time (1 cup divided by 2 cups; select “30% to 70% of the total dark green offerings”).

Vegetable Example 2:

1 ½ cups of red/orange vegetables offered

(½ cup carrots w/brown sugar/butter, ½ cup tomatoes, ½ cup sweet potato w/marshmallows)

Result: Red/orange vegetables offered with added sugar 67% of the time (1 cup divided by 1 ½ cups; select “30% to 70% of the total red/orange offerings” for sugar)

Result: Red/orange vegetables offered with added fat 33% of the time (½ cup divided by 1 ½ cups; select “30% to 70% of the total red/orange offerings” for fat)

Simplified Nutrient Data Entry

- Next, scroll to the top and begin the "Main Dish Simplified Nutrient Data Entry" section and the "Other items" data entry section.

-All meals offered over the week have been pre-populated. These appear in column M1.

Main Dish Reporting

-In column M2, enter the Main Dish, the part of the meal associated with the information entered in columns M3-M5 (calories, saturated fat, number of planned weekly servings).

-If main dish served more than one day per week, add number of servings for all days offered.

-Do NOT include calorie or saturated fat information for meal components outside of the main dish (fruits, vegetables, milk, or anything reported in the Desserts/Sides/Condiments section).

-Some double counting may occur with main dishes containing large amounts of fruits or vegetables (e.g. chef salad). *If possible to report calorie and saturated fat information for main dish and exclude vegetables/fruits it contains, this is acceptable. Otherwise, report calorie and saturated fat information in entire entrée.*

-Include calorie and saturated fat information for condiments in Main Dish section (columns M3-M5), OR in the Desserts, Sides, and Condiments section (columns O2-O4).

-In last column, enter number of servings of each main dish offered over the course of the week. Rely on production records and historical data if this is a new menu.

-At the top of this section is a link to Optional Serving Size and Fraction Calculators, tools intended to help users with serving size calculations by volume or weight, adding fractions, and converting decimals to fractions.

Main Dish Example 1:

Meal Name is "Chicken nuggets w/roll and honey sauce."

Only chicken nugget nutrient information being entered → type "Chicken nuggets" (column M2)

Chicken nugget and honey sauce nutrient information → type "Chicken nuggets w/honey sauce"

Main Dish Example 2:

Hamburger on bun offered Monday (200 servings) and Thursday (300 servings)

Result: Report 500 servings (column M5)

Main Dish Example 3:

Submarine sandwich served w/Italian dressing

Reported in Main Dish: 300 sandwiches, each including 1 tablespoon dressing in analysis

Reported in Desserts/Sides/Condiments: 300 servings of 1 packet (tablespoon) of dressing

Desserts, Sides or Condiments Nutrient Reporting

- A link at the top jumps to a chart listing calories and saturated fat for commonly used condiments, such as margarine and salad dressings.
- Enter the name of the food item (O1), calories per serving (O2), and saturated fat grams per serving (O3). Use standard rounding procedures to two decimal points.
- These items have NOT been pre-populated. User must enter names of any desserts or sides containing grains or meat/meat alternates (rice pilaf, yogurt cup, whole grain cookie, “snack” items such as cheese sticks, etc). Information can be collected from nutrition labels, product specifications, or other sources.
- Enter the number of servings of each item offered over the course of the week (O4).
- For condiments, amounts may be entered based on a per serving basis or in bulk quantities based on weekly usage data. Total calories and saturated fat over the week is equivalent in either method of reporting. (The denominator for determining averages is the total number of MEALS served over the week [total of all numbers recorded in column O4]).

Condiments Example:

Item offered: salad dressing

Per Serving Reporting: 256 planned servings of 1 Tablespoon amounts (73 calories, 1.2 grams saturated fat per serving)

Bulk Quantity Reporting: 1 planned serving of 1 gallon offered over the week (18,688 calories, 307.2 grams saturated fat)

Nutrient Assessment

- Scroll to the bottom/middle of the screen (past the bottom of the Main Dish and Dessert/Side/Condiment chart).
- This section, “Daily Amounts Based on the Average for a 5-day week,” calculates daily average calories and percentage of calories from saturated fat. The values based on the entered menu are in grey boxes. The required range for the menu type is shown in the yellow boxes.
- If the menu meets requirements, the Assessment box turns Green. If the menu is within 25 calories of the required calorie range, or within half a percentage point of the saturated fat limit, the Assessment box turns Yellow. This provides SFAs an opportunity to work with their State as to why the menu is not within the range without an immediate rejection.
- If calories or saturated fat are beyond the cautionary range, the Assessment box turns Red.
- Simplified Nutrient Assessment is now complete- save this file and email or print for State Agency review.