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DATE: January 2010

TO: School Food Authority Administrators and Food Service Managers

FROM: Christine Emerson, Director
School Nutrition Programs

SUBJECT: Early Release and Meal Program Benefits

This memorandum is regarding early release days from school and the availability of school meals. If a school has an early release day and offers school meals to any students, then all students must be offered a meal. For example, a school may not offer lunch to elementary and middle school students and not to high school students on early release days. High school students must also have the option to participate in the school lunch programs on these days.

According to USDA guidance, FNS Instruction 788-2: Partial Implementation of the School Meal Programs in an Individual School, school food authorities must make program benefits available during meal service to all children attending participating schools. While a school may have legitimate problems accommodating all students within a given time or space, it is improper to arbitrarily deny a certain segment of the student body access to the lunch program.

This requirement does not include partial day students that would not normally attend school during the lunch period (preschool, kindergarten, half-day high school students).

If you have questions, please contact School Nutrition Programs at (406) 444-2501.