



January 17, 2019

Update: Child Nutrition Programs and the Federal Government Shutdown

Due to the ongoing partial federal government shutdown, the OPI wants to be sure that all administrators in Montana are aware that the Department of Education has been fully funded through federal fiscal year 2019, however, school nutrition program reimbursements are through the USDA. Montana has available funding to last through March for school nutrition reimbursements. We hope that the partial federal shutdown will be resolved before nutrition program budgets are impacted but we will continue to keep you updated.

Reimbursement Funding

- School Nutrition Programs has funding through March.
- We are directed by the USDA to continue to administer the programs as usual in accordance with Federal statute and regulations.
- We will keep schools updated about funding for these programs.

School Meals Eligibility for Furloughed Families

On January 7, 2019, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service replied to a question about school meals eligibility for furloughed families.

“The income eligibility guidelines for free and reduced-price school meals are based on annual income. While there is no prohibition on households with furloughed employees applying for benefits during a furlough, School Food Authorities (SFAs) should manage the application process in a manner which reflects their unique circumstances. During the furlough period, these households may not have information on the duration of the furlough or its ultimate impact on household income. Therefore, it is reasonable for SFAs to remind households that free or reduced-price eligibility is intended to reflect actual annual income. School districts should urge any families who are approved for free or reduced-price meals based on their reduced income during a furlough period to terminate their free/reduced price status should the economic hardship they had anticipated due to the furlough be remedied by a return to work and/or restoration of pay for the furlough period.

In addition, families should be made aware that if they are selected for verification later in the school year, they will be required to produce documentation of actual income for the application month. School districts may choose to verify applications “for cause” if they have specific information indicating that the information on the application is not accurate.”

Please consider this information while working with families in your district who may have been affected by the furlough.

Contact School Nutrition Programs at 406-444-2501 with questions.