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## CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Child Care Center Sponsors  
**FROM:** Ann-Marie Martin, State of Alaska CACFP Specialist  
**SUBJECT:** Automatic Free Meal Eligibility for Alaska Head Start enrollees  
**DATE:** June 30, 2008

Effective December 12, 2007 all children enrolled in Head Start became automatically eligible for free meals in Child Nutrition Programs, even if the child did not qualify for Head Start based on income. All reimbursable meals served to children enrolled in Alaska Head programs may be claimed at the free rate which may provide increased income and reduced paperwork to CACFP centers. This automatic eligibility will not apply to siblings of those Head Start enrollees who do not qualify for Head Start based on income.

**Background:**

Since 1995, Head Start programs have been able to automatically claim children for free meals when they were enrolled in Head Start *and* qualified for Head Start based on income. When Alaska Head Start enrolled children have also been enrolled in CACFP child care, families have completed the income eligibility paperwork to determine if children were eligible for free meals.

On December 12, 2007 the President signed "The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007" (PL 110-134) which amended the eligibility criteria in section 645 of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9840). Public Law 110-334 also amended sections 9(b)(12)(A)(iii) and 17(c)(5) of the National School Lunch Act to correspond with the new eligibility criteria. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service informed the Alaska Department of Education Child Nutrition Services (EED CNS) of this change several weeks ago.

**How This Change May Affect Your Program:**

A few center sponsors may be able to claim an additional limited number of Alaska Head Start enrolled children in the free category.

To claim Head Start children in the free category, families may provide an official enrollment verification document, in lieu of a Confidential Income Statement (CIS) form, for Head Start-enrolled children who also attend the center.

EED CNS has formalized this process by requesting Alaska Head Start programs provide parents and guardians of participants with an official document certifying a child is enrolled in the Head Start program. The document must be on Head Start letterhead, state the name of the child(ren), the school year for which the child(ren) is enrolled, and be signed and dated by an Head Start official.

When the Head Start program busses children to the center, the program may provide the center with an official document on the sponsor's letterhead, which lists the names of the Head Start-enrolled children and the school year (e.g. 2008-2009). The document must be signed and dated by a Head Start official.

Since the new law went into effect on December 12, 2007, sponsors may exercise one of two options:

**Option 1** If sponsors determine that most or all Head Start-enrolled children were claimed in the free category, sponsors do not need to take immediate action. When developing the FY2009 Rate Percentage Certification Statement sponsors may accept a Head Start official document in lieu of a Confidential Income Statement.

**Option 2** If sponsors determine that a significant number of Head Start-enrolled children were not claimed in the free category, the sponsor can request a reimbursement claim adjustment from December 1, 2007 to the present.

Sponsors considering this option should weigh the time investment with the expected financial benefits before making a decision. To exercise this option, please contact EED CNS before July 30, 2008, to discuss the issue and request instructions and forms.

Sponsors using this option must submit the following documents to EED CNS by August 15, 2008:

- December 2008 30-day Study Attendance Roster for affected sites using December attendance; Income Eligibility Applications and Head Start documents valid for December 2007
- Copies of the Rate Percentage Certification and the applicable Head Start documents

We are excited about this policy change as it provides increased financial support for many programs and significantly reduces paperwork for Alaska Head Start sponsors. If you have any questions please contact me at (907) 465-8711 or by e-mail at [annmarie.martin@alaska.gov](mailto:annmarie.martin@alaska.gov).