



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the School Child Nutrition Programs

FROM: Therese Dandeneau, Education Consultant
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: September 26, 2012

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum #45-12
Application and Other Household Materials for Limited English Proficient Households

This memorandum serves as a reminder to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) of their responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) households in the upcoming 2012-13 school year. LEAs are responsible for ensuring that their applications and other household materials (letter, application, instructions, notices and verification materials) are available in a language the LEP household can understand. The following information has been provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to assist LEAs with determining the appropriate means of communication with LEP households:

- **Identify the primary language of households that may be free or reduced-price eligible and communicate in that language.** Most schools have a system in place to identify parents' primary language for communications regarding the child's education. LEAs can use information gained from using a Home Language Survey, which is conducted at enrollment to determine the dominant language in the home. As an alternative, LEAs could use FNS' "[I speak](#)" list to identify the appropriate language for communications regarding school meals.
- **Ensure that all LEP households applying for benefits receive language services. Offering the most common alternative language is not sufficient to the USDA.**
- **Serve parents or guardians with limited literacy.** It is important for LEAs to ensure that individuals with limited literacy can understand the household materials. The USDA prototype materials are designed to be comprehensible to someone with low literacy. The Federal government's guidelines for plain writing are available at [Regional Directors State Directors Page](#). For parents or guardians who are unable to read, LEAs are expected to provide assistance so that parents can understand and complete the application, certification and verification process.
- **Provide written translations.** LEAs may choose to develop their own written translations of materials (including applications submitted online) in the most prevalent languages of households in their district. As a reminder, the FNS does provide [translations of prototype materials](#) to assist LEAs with this process. The FNS also expects LEAs to take appropriate measures to ensure that language and communication are not barriers to program participation. *If LEAs do not have their own translated application materials, they must at a minimum make FNS' prototype translations available.* Currently the FNS application package contains many materials the LEA may need to send out and the FNS understands this has deterred some LEAs from making these materials available directly to the households. The FNS is preparing an application in all currently available translations that contains only the information generally made available when a household applies and the FNS will notify the state agency office when this option is available to the LEAs.

- **Provide oral interpretation services.** For parents that speak less prevalent languages or who have limited literacy, the LEAs should identify oral interpretation services available within the school that can be used to communicate with households about school meal benefits. Parents should not need to rely on family members (especially children) or friends, as these people are not always able to provide quality and accurate interpretations. LEAs are encouraged to also partner with other local resources, such as migrant or refugee assistance agencies when available.
- **Assist with verification.** LEAs are expected to have a system in place to provide verification notices to each household in the primary language of the parents or guardians in the household, follow up with households that do not respond to the initial verification request, and provide oral assistance if the parent or guardian has difficulty understanding the written request. The USDA translations of prototype verification materials are available on the FNS Web site with the translated application materials.
- **Include the required non-discrimination statement.** Parents need to understand that they will be treated fairly if they apply for free or reduced price school meals. The letter to households or the application itself **must** include the non-discrimination statement that appears on the USDA’s prototype application.

LEAs are reminded that the nonprofit food service account is a legitimate funding source to pay for translation services for food service purposes if there is a need to translate materials in a language that is not currently available.

Questions may be directed to:

COUNTY ASSIGNMENTS	CONSULTANT	E-MAIL	PHONE
Litchfield County New London County	Fionnuala Brown	fionnuala.brown@ct.gov	860-807-2129
Fairfield County Middlesex County (towns/cities beginning with C-E) New Haven County (towns/cities beginning with A-M)	Jackie Schipke	jackie.schipke@ct.gov	860-807-2123
Middlesex County (towns/cities beginning with F-W) Tolland County Windham County	Susan Alston	susan.alston@ct.gov	860-807-2081
Hartford County New Haven County (towns/cities beginning with N-W)	Teri Dandeneau	teri.dandeneau@ct.gov	860-807-2079

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