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Date: May 3, 2022

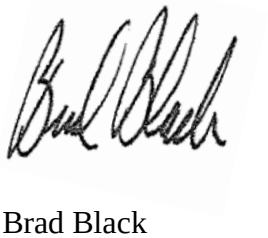
To: School Principals and Administrators

This notice is intended to provide you with information about the status of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) for next school year (2022-23). As you may know, the USDA and ISBE oversee all regulatory aspects of school meal programs. During the past three years, USDA has issued waivers due to, and during, the pandemic, allowing school districts to serve free meals to all children in participating NSLP schools, regardless of their qualification status prior to the pandemic.

As of now, no waivers have been issued for the upcoming school year. What this means to you and your students is that FSP will have to return to the procedures that had been in place prior to the pandemic. FSP will be re-examining direct certification rosters to qualify as many schools and students as possible. Families will be required to complete Household Eligibility Applications to obtain free or reduced-price meals, and those who do not qualify will need to pay.

There is cause for optimism though. There has been a significant amount of lobbying and pushback regarding discontinuing what has become known as universal free meal programs for all school students. Legislation has been introduced into the United States Senate and certain state legislatures to extend pandemic-era waivers one additional year. Clearly most within participating school communities want to make universal free a permanent fixture of the NSLP.

Nevertheless, nothing has been anywhere close to approved for next year. Our guidance to you and your families is to expect that universal free will not be in place for next year and that all of us will need to take the necessary steps to resume a free, reduced-price, or paid status structure for school meals. We will of course keep you posted as developments occur.



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