

## SPECIAL MILK PROGRAM Q&A

**By: Barbara St. Louis, Food Service Specialist I.** Barbara monitors the schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs in Region 2, from Clinton County south to Columbia County and including Putnam County along the eastern region of New York State. Barbara brings a diversified background in foodservice and management to the department.

### 1. What is the Special Milk Program?

The Special Milk Program provides participating schools and child care institutions with federal cash assistance for each half-pint of milk served.

### 2. Who can participate in the Special Milk Program?

Any public school, nonpublic non-profit school or residential child care institution (RCCI) that does not participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP) may sponsor a milk program.

**Exception:** Sponsors that participate in the NSLP and/or SBP may opt for the Special Milk Program for half-day pre-kindergarten or kindergarten children who do not have access to the lunch and/or breakfast programs.

### 3. What "milk" products can be claimed as milk?

Only fluid milk that meets the state definition of milk. This includes whole milk, unflavored lowfat milk, flavored milk, and skim milk. Soy products are not considered milk.

### 4. Are children charged for the milk?

The sponsor may choose to offer paid milk only, or free and paid milk. There is no reduced milk category. To be eligible to receive free milk, children must meet eligibility requirements, and submit a direct certification letter or an application with a foodstamp/TANF number, or income and family size information.

The charge to children who do not qualify to receive free milk should be planned to cover the cost of serving the milk to children:

(Cost of Milk + Labor + Straws/Napkins, etc.) - Reimbursement = Charge to Students

### 5. What is the reimbursement rate for a half-pint of milk?

The reimbursement rate for the 2002-03 school year for paid milk is \$0.1350 per half-pint. Free milk is reimbursed at the sponsor's average cost per half-pint, i.e., the total cost of all milk purchased during the claim period, divided by the total number of half-pints purchased.

### 6. Can children be served less than a half-pint of milk? What if a child can not drink milk and is served juice instead?

Children may be served less than a half-pint of milk, but reimbursement is made based on the total number of half-pints served not the number of children served. For example, ten children in a pre-kindergarten class are served four fluid ounces of milk each, for a total of 40 fluid ounces. Divide the 40 fluid ounces by 8 fluid ounces per half-pint, which equals 5 half-pints that can be claimed for reimbursement.

Students may be offered juice, but it cannot be claimed for reimbursement.

### 7. Is there a limit to the number of times milk can be served each day? Is there a limit to the number of half-pints that each child can take?

There is no limit. Sponsors may serve milk as often as they wish, provided that all eligible children are allowed access to the same number of serving periods. If a "milk only school" decides to offer milk during a mid-morning snack break and at lunchtime, teachers cannot choose to deny their students access to mid-morning milk.

Each child can be served and claimed for as many half-pints as they can reasonably consume at school. Milk sent home with a child can not be claimed.

### 8. What are the record keeping requirements for the Special Milk Program?

Annually, sponsors participating in the free milk option must distribute a free milk application and Letter to the Parent to all enrolled children, and send a public release to the local news media and unemployment office. To

determine the number of half-pints eligible for reimbursement, the sponsor must take a point of service count by category for all milk served to children. This can be done using a coded roster, tickets, or other approvable collection methods.

Sponsors offering paid milk only must have a system for determining the number of half-pints served to children. This can be done using a roster, tickets tick sheets, or an inventory count.

Both free and paid milk sponsors must submit a monthly claim for reimbursement, and adhere to all civil rights requirements. All records must be kept on file for three years plus the current year.

**9. Can income from the milk program be used to purchase books or other items for the school?**

No. All program income (reimbursement received, sale of milk, etc.) must accrue to the Special Milk Program fund, and can be used only to pay the direct expenses of the program (milk, straws, napkins, salary of milk coordinator, equipment, etc.). All milk program monies must be accounted for separately from the general fund. It is recommended that the sponsor establish a separate bank account for the milk program.

The sponsor may recover the cost of expenses such as electricity, garbage disposal, custodial services, etc., by using the indirect cost rate and formula supplied by the State.

**10. How can a school or RCCI enter the Special Milk Program?**

Contact your Child Nutrition Program Administration regional office, which will provide the necessary applications and assist in setting up proper recordkeeping procedures.

**11. Do the same regulations for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs regarding provisions for dietary restrictions due to a child's disability apply to the Special Milk Program?**

A child with a disability must be provided substitutions or modifications in school meals, including the Special Milk Program when a statement signed by a licensed physician supports that need. For schools participating in the Special Milk Program, reimbursement may be received for beverages listed on the physician's statement as appropriate substitutions for milk.