



Office for Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education  
Office of Facilities, Management and Information Services  
Child Nutrition Program Administration  
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TO: District Superintendents  
Superintendents of Public Schools  
Chief Administrators of Nonpublic Schools Participating in the National School  
Lunch and School Breakfast Programs  
Chancellor of New York City Department of Education  
Executive Directors of Residential Child Care Institutions  
Food Service Directors/Managers

FROM: Frances N. O'Donnell, Coordinator

SUBJECT: School Meals Initiative (SMI) Reviews

All school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program must undergo a School Meals Initiative (SMI) review once every five years. The review is part of the United State Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) strategy to ensure that school menus are in compliance with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and certain nutrient standards when averaged over a school week.

The 2002-03 school year represents year five, the final year of the current USDA SMI cycle. Our plan for the 2002-03 school year is to complete all remaining SMI reviews in SFAs that have not had an SMI review in the current cycle, which began in July 1998.

Over the past eight years, we have provided training on expectations and the documentation needed for the Child Nutrition Program Administration team to conduct the required nutritional analysis for SFAs using the Food Based or Traditional Meal Pattern or to review the SFA's analysis, for SFAs using the Nutrient Standard or Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning options.

You should be prepared to have an SMI review conducted by a Child Nutrition Program Representative during the upcoming 2002-03 school year. You will be notified in writing prior to the review, which will evaluate a specified five-day period. To expedite the review, you should notify the food service director and any other appropriate staff, and have the following items copied and available for the reviewer: menus; standardized recipes; production records; and labels from processed food items used during the five-day period. The reviewer will also observe food preparation and serving practices on the day of review.

The SMI reviewer will meet with you or your designated representative at the beginning of the review to detail the process and will provide you with a summary of findings at the completion of the review. You may invite your food service director or other appropriate staff to be a part of these entrance and exit meetings. Following the review, you will be provided with a written report and recommendations for appropriate corrective action, where applicable.

The SMI report will be perceived by your school community as a “report card” on the nutritional integrity of your SFA. Parents and students will want validation that your program is providing healthy choices.

SMI reports from each SFA are also provided to USDA in order to evaluate and track the progress schools are making in improving the nutritional quality of school meals nationwide. In addition, New York is one of seven states selected to be part of a ongoing study to evaluate the SMI process and results of the findings.

Questions regarding the SMI process should be directed to the SMI team in the State Education Department Child Nutrition Program Administration Office at (518) 473-1525.