



## School Meals Initiative Fact Sheet

### What is the School Meals Initiative (SMI) for Healthy Children?

Effective July 13, 1995, a final rule was implemented which amended the regulations governing the nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. The final rules require that by the School Year 1996/97, all school lunches and breakfasts are consistent with the recommendations of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. This rule established specific minimum standards for calories and key nutrients which meals must meet. To assist and provide training for these rules, USDA implemented the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children.

### What are *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*?

- Eat a variety of foods
- Balance the food you eat with physical activity-maintain or improve your weight
- Choose a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables, and fruits
- Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
- Choose a diet moderate in sugars
- Choose a diet moderate in salt and sodium
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation

### How are menus planned with the new rules?

School Food Authorities must use one of the four options for menu planning. The options include:

- Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning
- Traditional Meal Pattern
- Nutrient Standard Menu Planning
- Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning

Different options may be used in different schools and different options may be used for breakfast and lunch in the same school.

### How will menus be reviewed for compliance with SMI rules?

The regulations require that certain nutrients be monitored, to ensure that  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) has been met for breakfast and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the RDA for lunch, as well as meeting the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The State agency will monitor menus for compliance with these nutritional standards at a minimum of once every five years. A nutrient analysis will be conducted on selected menus for a week for food based menu planning systems.

Documentation of data used in nutrient analysis will be reviewed for School Food Authorities using Nutrient Standard or Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning.

### Will the nutrient monitoring be done as part of the Coordinated Review Effort (CRE)?

The SMI nutrition review may be conducted at the same time that the CRE is scheduled or done as a separate program review, because they are two separate procedures. SMI provides technical assistance to SFA's in planning meals that meet the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

### **What records will be needed to conduct the nutrient analysis?**

One week's menus for each grade/age level served for one school under the jurisdiction of the SFA will be reviewed. Menus from more than one site will be analyzed only if multiple menu planning options are used by the SFA. Records needed include:

- Menus for the week being reviewed
- Complete production records for the week being reviewed
- All Standardized recipes used for the week being reviewed, to include USDA as well as local recipes
- Manufacturer's nutrition information of commercially processed foods used during the week being reviewed
- Food product descriptions
- Estimates of a la carte sales and adult meals which are part of the production record
- Printout provided from the USDA approved software for the week being reviewed when a school is following Nutrient Standard and Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning or is utilizing USDA approved software to conduct their own nutrient analysis for food based menu planning

### **What will the criteria be for meeting the Dietary Guidelines and Nutrient Standards?**

- Lunch meets 1/3 of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for protein, vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium and calories
- Breakfast meets 1/4 of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for the above nutrients and calories
- When averaged over a school week, all school meals contain 30% or less of the total calories from fat
- When averaged over a school week, all school meals contain less than 10% of calories from saturated fat
- Reduction in levels of sodium and cholesterol and an increase in dietary fiber

### **What actions may be necessary if the new regulations are not met?**

School Food Authorities which do not meet the dietary guidelines and nutrient standards will receive technical assistance from the State agency to assist them in developing an improvement plan for meeting the goals of the School Meals Initiative.

When it is viewed that the School Food Authority is making a good faith effort to plan healthy meals, reimbursement payments will not be affected.

If you desire further information on this topic, please contact:

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