

Volume 1  
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# MAKING IT COUNT

[www.makingitcount.info](http://www.makingitcount.info)

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## Introducing a New Office for Food and Nutrition Programs Endeavor

ESE is bringing some excitement to the beginning of school year 2016-2017 with the introduction of a quarterly newsletter! The department will be using the "Making It Count" periodical to inform school nutrition personnel about updates regarding school nutrition programs at the state and federal level, professional development opportunities, and best practices utilized across Massachusetts' school nutrition programs.

Whether you are new or a seasoned member of school nutrition, it does not take long to see that the resources available regarding school nutrition programs are endless and ever-changing. Our primary goal is to focus all of this knowledge into one location. Frequently, updates about these topics have been scattered



amongst numerous web sites, memos, and conferences. We aspire to ease the burden of shuffling through multiple sources of information through this newsletter so you can get back to what's really important: feeding the kids!

As ESE embarks on this new project, the department invites you to provide any feedback and ideas for "Making It Count!" We hope that over time, this newsletter will develop into a great resource to deliver both information and inspiration to your kitchens and schools.

Send your thoughts and ideas to Lisa Jackson at [lisa.jackson@doe.mass.edu](mailto:lisa.jackson@doe.mass.edu)

## FAQ: Professional Standards

Recently, there has been confusion about whether training hours for professional standards may be rolled over from year to year. USDA allows state agencies to allow this or not.

**The department has determined that professional standards requirements must be met on an annual basis from July 1st to June 30th of each school year.**

This means that training hours completed in excess of the minimum annual requirement may not be

credited towards subsequent school years.

If your district is due for an administrative review, the state agency reviewer will be looking for documentation outlining the training that each staff member has received as of the day of the review *in addition* to any planned training(s) that will allow them to meet the minimum annual training requirements set forth by USDA.

Please see attached USDA's "Guide to Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs" for additional information.

## Delinquent Meal Payments and Bad Debt in Massachusetts

In July of this year, USDA released memo SP 47-2016 discussing *Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments*. The memo was written to distinguish delinquent debt from bad debt and assist sponsors in establishing a procedure on how to address these issues. Massachusetts had set a stricter policy and addressed the topic of bad debt in the August 7, 2014 memo titled "Resource Management Review Findings."

***While the USDA memo states that unpaid meal charges in the state of delinquent debt may be carried over at the end of the school year, Massachusetts treats all delinquent debt as bad debt at the end of each school year. Although the school district should continue to pursue the payment of these funds, bad debt (unpaid meal charges) must be offset from non-federal sources outside of the non-profit school food service account.***

Funds to pay off bad debt may include monies from the school district's general fund, special funding from State or local governments, school or community organizations, or any other non-Federal sources.

Please see USDA memo SP 47-2016 and Massachusetts memo released on August 7, 2014 for additional information.

### Delinquent Debt

- Delinquent debts are unpaid meal charges that are considered collectable and efforts are being made to collect it
- Delinquent debt remains on accounting documents until it is either collected or is determined to be uncollectable and written off

### Bad Debt

- Delinquent debt becomes bad debt when local officials determine that further collection efforts are useless or too costly
- Bad debt is not considered an asset as it has been deemed uncollectable and must be written off as operating losses

**IN MASSACHUSETTS, ALL DELINQUENT DEBT BECOMES BAD DEBT AT THE END OF EACH SCHOOL YEAR.**

## Eligibility Carryover Period for Transferring Students

According to data from the Department of Education, most students will change schools at least once between kindergarten and 12th grade. For low-income students, this frequency is even greater. The School Meals Programs play a vital role in ensuring food security to low-income children, therefore, LEAs are encouraged to prevent any lapses in meal benefit eligibility for transfer students.

Students that transfer to a school in a new LEA may have their meal benefit eligibility accepted once the new LEA obtains written documentation from the former LEA stating the student's eligibility status. In this case, an email would be sufficient and no parent or guardian consent is necessary for the disclosure of this information.

Please see USDA memos SP 51-2016 and SP 52-2016 for additional information.

### Transfer to a school within the same LEA

- The new school **MUST** accept the eligibility determination from the student's former school

### Transfer to a school in a new LEA

- The new LEA is **PERMITTED** to accept the eligibility determination from the student's former LEA

### Transferring from a Provision school to a non-Provision school within the same LEA or between two LEAs

- Students may be provided with free meals for up to 30 operating days (or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first)

## Unpaid Meal Charges and Meal Charge Policies

Massachusetts has always recommended that all districts have a meal charge policy in place to ensure that school nutrition programs have clear procedures on how to address the issue of unpaid meal charges. USDA memo *Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies* states that FNS has expanded this requirement to all districts participating in the NSLP and SBP nationwide.

In USDA's memo, there is guidance on developing an effective meal charge policy and a handbook titled *Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge* has been released on the USDA website. This resource can be found at [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/unpaidmealcharges\\_guide.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/unpaidmealcharges_guide.pdf)

The USDA memo also states that no later than July 1, 2017, all SFAs operating NSLP and SBP must have a written and clearly communicated meal charge policy in order to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to this issue. Meal charge policies must be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households that transfer to the school during the school year. The policy must also be disseminated to all school or SFA-level staff responsible for policy enforcement. Meal charge policies may remain consistent for all students or vary based on student grade levels.

Please see USDA memo SP 46-2016 for additional information.

### Items to address when reviewing your meal charge policy:

- If alternate meals are offered, what do they contain? Are they provided at some charge, at a lesser charge, or at no cost?
- How is overt identification of students with a low or negative balance prevented?
- Is there a limit set on charges a child may make?
- What are the procedures to collect delinquent meal charge debts?
- Are school officials involved in the development of the meal charge policy to ensure buy-in from key stakeholders?

## FAQ: Breakfast and Lunch on Half Days

The department has received questions concerning the district's responsibilities for making lunch available on half days.

***Massachusetts General Law (c. 69 Sec 1C) states all public schools must make lunches available to children. This generally pertains to full school days, however, districts that are not making lunch available on half days should consider the needs of all students that would otherwise not eat a healthy lunch on these shortened school days. Additionally, not making lunch available to economically disadvantaged students on half days contributes to the food insecurity of these at-risk students as, in many cases, these students depend on school meals for their nutrition.***

Schools that are mandated by state law to offer breakfast must continue to offer breakfast during half days.

Schools may choose to serve meals that can be assembled quickly and are easier to administer, such as a cold meal. Also, breakfast in the classroom would be an excellent option if not already being implemented.



## Student Approved Snack Recipes for Schools

Keep your eyes peeled for a new resource to be released by The John C. Stalker Institute of Food and Nutrition: "Student Approved Snack Recipes for Schools." Inside, you will find 14 snack recipes that have been standardized and analyzed for compliance with the state and federal nutritional standards for snacks.

Examples include:

- Arctic Bean Dip & Veggie Sticks
- Buffalo Dip w/ Veggie Sticks & Pita Bread
- Chocolate-Covered Strawberry Smoothie
- The Grape Escape Parfait
- "The Hulk" Smoothie

This recipe book will be available at [www.johnstalkerinstitute.org](http://www.johnstalkerinstitute.org)

**"Green Monstah" Smoothie**  
Serving Size: 1 smoothie (292g)

*This dairy-free smoothie is perfect for anyone with lactose intolerance or a dairy allergy, or for anyone who simply wants the sweetness of a fruit-based smoothie. Packed with super foods, this smoothie is perfect for Red Sox Opening day, or rename it for another green-based holiday or event!*


Nutrition Facts	
Calories 170 Calories from Fat 5	
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 0g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	1%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 20mg	1%
Total Carb. 41g	14%
Fiber 4g	16%
Sugars 29g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 50%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 6%	Iron 6%

**Ingredients:** orange juice, bananas, peaches, apples, spinach

**Allergens:** None

Note: All ingredients should be evaluated for allergens prior to service.

NSLP Counts as 1 ¼ cups of fruit (includes ½ cups of fruit juice) and ¼ cup of vegetables (includes ¼ cup of dark green vegetables).



This recipe was evaluated using the JSI Recipe Tool and meets MA School Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods and Beverages and USDA Smart Snacks in School for category Fruit.

## Clarification on Administrative Review Cycle

In early September, a memo was released by the department alerting sponsors of the Administrative Review (AR) schedule for school year 2016-2017. There has been some confusion as to why they are or are not on the list to be reviewed based on the 3-year review cycle concept.

For school year 2016-2017, the department is beginning a new

**The department would like to clarify that sponsors will undergo an AR once within every 3-year cycle. This does not necessarily equate to an AR every three years.**

3-year cycle. It is possible for a sponsor to have ARs within one or two years and not necessarily three years apart. For example, a

sponsor who may have been reviewed during school year 2015-2016 could be scheduled for another review in school year 2016-2017 as each is within separate 3-year cycles. State agencies must conduct ARs of all SFAs participating in the NSLP and/or SBP at least once during each 3-year review cycle, provided that each SFA is reviewed at least once every 4 years.

## USDA Farm to School Grant Opportunity



**Is your district looking to incorporate more local foods into your kitchens?**

If so, you may be interested in USDA's Farm to School Grant which anticipates to award approximately \$5 million in funding to support these efforts. Each award, which could

range from \$15,000 to \$100,000, may be used to:

- Create new menu items
- Establish supply chains
- Offer taste tests to children
- Purchase equipment

- Plan school gardens
- Organize field trips to agricultural operations

All proposals are due to USDA via [grants.gov](http://grants.gov) by December 8, 2016. Visit [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool) for more information.

## Important Procurement Notice

On August 9, 2016, Governor Baker signed into law *An Act Modernizing Municipal Finance and Government* (the "Act"). The Act amended M.G.L. c. 30B ("Chapter 30B"), also known as the Uniform Procurement Act, by increasing dollar thresholds and requirements related to solicitation when local jurisdictions procure supplies and services.

***State regulations that are more restrictive than federal regulations must be followed in school food service program procurements.***

Please see the updates to dollar thresholds and posting requirements outlined in the chart below, effective November 7th, 2016:

Dollar Threshold	Solicitation Requirements
Less than \$10,000	Use sound business practices to ensure favorable pricing by periodically soliciting price lists or quotations (verbally or in writing) from responsive and responsible vendors.
\$10,000-\$50,000	Request three <i>written</i> quotations from at least three vendors who customarily provide the supply or service based on a <i>written purchase description</i> that the jurisdiction provides to each vendor.  Procurement officers must keep a record of the names and addresses of all persons submitting a quotation, and the date and amount of each quotation.
More than \$50,000	Use an invitation for bids (IFB) or request for proposals (RFP). Advertise the IFB or RFP as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Post the IFB or RFP on the COMMBUYS system administered by the Operational Services Division</li> <li>2. Publish a notice in a conspicuous place in or near your jurisdiction's local office</li> <li>3. Advertise in a local newspaper once every two weeks before the IFB or RFP are due</li> <li>4. For contracts estimated to exceed \$100,000, publish notice in the <i>Goods and Services Bulletin</i>.</li> </ol>



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*Please send us best practices,  
testimonials, ideas, and  
feedback... we may feature it  
in our next issue!*

**This institution is an equal  
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## ESE Training Opportunities

**Nuts & Bolts Ongoing Training Series:** Please visit [www.johnstalkerinstitute.org](http://www.johnstalkerinstitute.org) for details and registration.

- *Wednesday, November 16, 2016 in Framingham: USDA Foods & Inventory Management*

This in-person session will provide an in-depth understanding of USDA foods such as DoD Fresh, monthly offer sheets, diversion survey, and making the most of your entitlement dollars.

- *Wednesday, December 14, 2016 as webinar: Local Wellness Policies*

This online session will review requirements for developing a strong local wellness policy and provide examples and strategies for developing a meaningful policy. Participation of all members of your local school wellness policy committee is encouraged.



## Notable Dates:

### OCTOBER

- **3: The Verification Process** must BEGIN on or after October 3, 2016. The sample size of applications for verification MUST be based on the number of approved income eligible applications on file as of October 1, 2016. Programs should begin by directly verifying the sample size through the Virtual Gateway.
- **3: The Food Safety Inspection Compliance Reports** for the 2016-2017 school year must be submitted online to ESE. The report is located in the Security Portal under Compliance.
- **10-14: National School Lunch Week**

- **21: USDA Food Orders** for November must be submitted.
- **24: Food Day**
- **31: Profit and Loss Statement** must be uploaded online in the Financial Packet.
- **Reminder:** Cease using last year's eligibility status 30 days into the school year

### NOVEMBER

- **Direct Certification** must be conducted through the Virtual Gateway.
- **4: Massachusetts Farm & Sea to School Conference** Visit [www.massfarmtoschool.org/](http://www.massfarmtoschool.org/) conference for more information.

- **15: The Verification Process** must be completed.
- **18: USDA Food Orders** for December must be submitted.
- **Reminder:** Begin the Accu-claim process (for districts/agencies with two or more schools/sites) and complete by February 3, 2017. Note that there is now a separate Accu-claim form for breakfast and lunch programs available in ESE's Security Portal.

### DECEMBER

- **16: USDA Food Orders** for January must be submitted.