

## **Categorical Eligibility for Migrant, Homeless, and Runaway Children Under the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs**

Effective July 1, 2004, Section 107 of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 amended Section 9(b) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to make runaway, homeless and migrant children **categorically** eligible for **free** meal benefits under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Following are the guidelines set out by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for implementation of this amendment.

### **DOCUMENTATION AND PROCEDURES**

1. Homeless, runaway or migratory children are automatically certified as eligible for free meal benefits and can begin receiving free meal benefits upon proper documentation for meals. **Please note that documentation as runaway, homeless, or migratory can only be provided by Migrant Education or Homeless staff.**
2. **Migrant Education/Homeless staff are responsible for providing proper documentation of a child's status to the Food Service Directors in each school district.**
3. Initial documentation for the 04-05 school year includes (a) a list of eligible migrant/homeless/runaway children as September 28, 2004 that is signed and dated by authorized Migrant Education/Homeless staff or (b) an electronic list from authorized Migrant Education/Homeless staff of eligible migrant/homeless/runaway children as of receipt of this notice.
4. **For all subsequent years, these lists should be provided to Food Service Directors within the first week of school.**
5. The lists should include each child's first name, middle name/initial, last name and date of birth. Include respective school building if available.
6. After the initial lists are provided at the beginning of each school year, proper documentation will be considered (a) electronic or hard copy notification from authorized Migrant Education/Homeless staff to the appropriate Food Service Director each time a new child is identified or (b) a free and reduced meal application that is simply signed and dated by Migrant Education /Homeless staff at the time of a child's enrollment in a school district. **The application does not have to be completed in full.** Regardless of the method used, all information in #5 should be included.
7. **Once notification is received, the school food authorities/local education agencies must notify the responsible guardian as soon as possible about the child's free meal eligibility** (any application submitted on behalf of the child would be disregarded because of categorical eligibility).

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

- Documentation of status provided by Migrant Education/Homeless staff is in lieu of free and reduced price meal applications and must be sought, as much as possible, **prior to** an application being completed by the responsible guardian.
- **Upon enrollment, if school district staff suspects that a child is migrant/homeless/runaway** but the student is not being enrolled by Migrant Education/Homeless staff, contact local Migrant Education/Homeless staff so that a staff person can determine the child's eligibility status.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- Contact information for Migrant Education/Homeless staff in each area is accessible by going to their respective websites.  
    Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program– [www.migrated.state.pa.us](http://www.migrated.state.pa.us)  
    Pennsylvania Homeless Children’s Initiative –  
    <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/homeless>
- The Department of Education will provide Migrant Education/Homeless staff in the local areas with a list of names and email addresses for each Food Service Director by district.
- Additional information regarding the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs can be found at [http://www.pde.state.pa.us/food\\_nutrition/site/default.asp](http://www.pde.state.pa.us/food_nutrition/site/default.asp)