
Subject: **WATER AVAILABILITY DURING MEAL SERVICE**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure students have access to drinking water during meal service.

Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) are required to make potable water available to children at no charge in the place where breakfast and lunch meals are served during the meal service time. (Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Public Law 111-296; Memo Code SP 28-2011-Revised; FR Vol. 78 No. 125 7/28/2013). There are a variety of ways schools can implement this requirement.

- A water fountain in the cafeteria or immediately adjacent to the cafeteria.
- A faucet that allows students to fill their own bottles or cups with drinking water.
- Provide water pitchers and cups.

Potable water availability is a requirement, but it is not considered part of a reimbursable meal and students are not required to take water. Water should not be made available to students in a way that may interfere with the selection of reimbursable meal components, including low-fat or fat-free milk.

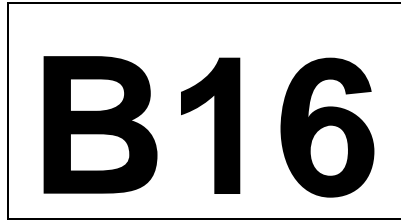
PROCEDURE

Location Requirement

- A. The location of the potable water must be in the food service area or immediately adjacent to the meal service area. If a school has a water fountain that is immediately outside the door to the foodservice area (and accessible to all students during the meal service), this could be considered sufficient. The water fountain must be operational and able to provide potable water to students in a reasonable time during their meal period.

FOOD AND NUTRITION PROCEDURES

Miami-Dade County Public Schools



Subject: **WATER AVAILABILITY DURING MEAL SERVICE**

- B. A water fountain in the food service area available to students during the meal period meets the requirement if the students have sufficient time to use the water fountain during their meal period. Students should not have to wait in long lines.
- C. Water fountains in courtyards outside the cafeteria are acceptable only if the water fountains are adjacent to the food service area and children are routinely allowed access to this area during the meal.
- D. Water is required in each location if a school has multiple locations in which they are serving the NSLP and SBP.

Cost

A student cannot be charged for cups in order to access water because this would be considered restricting access to water.

Alternate Serving Areas

- A. Water must be available for students served meals outside of the cafeteria, such as those in a classroom, in-school suspension, etc.
- B. Field trips where reimbursable meals are served to students may be exempted from the water requirement. However, schools should make an effort to have water available for all school related functions including field trips.

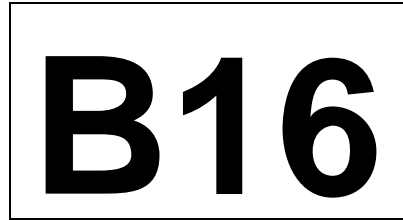
Availability at Other Meal Service Programs

- It is strongly encouraged to make potable water available during the afterschool snack/meal program.

Food Safety

School food service staff is responsible for maintaining and cleaning all their potable water equipment (e.g. water pitcher).

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General Concerns

- A. Water does not have to be served chilled; water can be served at room temperature. However, children may find water to be more palatable if served chilled.
- B. Schools should continue to follow the procedures documented in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) or the medical referral form concerning water for students under the American Disabilities Act (ADA).
- C. Water should be served plain. No fruit or vegetables can be added for flavor.
- D. If a water fountain is used, it is acceptable for the children to “raise their hand” to get up and go to the fountain. This would be considered “unrestricted access” as long as this is used to provide order and the student is not denied the opportunity to obtain water. All children should be able to use the water fountain in a timeframe that still allows enough time for consumption of the meal.
- E. Children cannot be required to bring their own cups, bottles or drinking vessels for water. School Food Service must provide cups at no cost to the child. The cup size should be suitable for the age of the child.

For Action By: Principals, Food Service Managers and Satellite Assistants

Refer Questions to: Department of Food and Nutrition

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