

HEALTHY HUNGER FREE KIDS ACT IMPACTS SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS

Information provided by the USDA News Release #0023.12

First Lady Michelle Obama and the U.S. Agriculture Secretary initiated the HHFKA to establish new standards for school meals making them healthier for 32 million kids nationwide. For the first time in fifteen years action is being taken to improve the health and nutrition in school meal programs. Mrs. Obama said, "As parents we try to prepare decent meals, limit junk food and try to ensure that our children follow a balanced diet, the last thing we want is for our hard work to be undone each day in the school cafeteria."

The standards set forth in the HHFKA include:

Offering students both fruit and vegetables every day of the week

Substantially increasing offerings for whole grain-rich foods

Offering only fat free or 1% low fat milk varieties

Limiting calories based on the age of the children being served to ensure proper portion size

Reducing the amounts of saturated fat, trans fat, sugar and salt in school meals.

USDA built the new school meal menu rules around recommendations from a panel of experts convened by the Institute of Medicine – a gold standard for evidence based health analysis. The standards were updated with key changes from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans – the Federal government's benchmark for nutrition aimed to foster healthy meal changes for schools.

In addition to the updated meal standards, other improvements include:

- Foods and beverages sold in vending machines and other venues on school campuses will also contribute to a healthy diet, carbonated beverages and foods of minimum nutritional value will no longer be available during the school day.
- Providing an increase in school meal funding – an additional \$.06 cents per meal served – to schools that meet the new standards and serve the improved meals. This is the first real increase in 30 years in school meal funding.
- Setting pricing standards for schools to ensure that revenues from non-Federal sources keep pace with the Federal commitment to provide healthy school meals.
- Training and technical assistance to monitor compliance with the new school meal standards
- Initiating more physical activity into school days to comply with Mrs. Obama's "Let's Move" campaign.