



STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

August 16, 2023

Alabama
State Board
of Education

MEMORANDUM

Governor Kay Ivey
President

TO: City and County Superintendents

Jackie Zeigler
District I

FROM: Eric G. Mackey *Egm*
State Superintendent of Education

Tracie West
District II
Vice President

RE: Collection of Race and Ethnicity Data for School Meal Programs

Stephanie Bell
District III

The Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) section of the Alabama State Department of Education is in the process of ensuring compliance with federal civil rights regulations in School Meal Programs. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) require all School Meal Program sponsors to collect race and ethnicity data of applicants and participants. The purpose of this data collection effort is to determine how effectively School Meal Programs are reaching potentially eligible students. Responses have no effect on eligibility.

Yvette M. Richardson, Ed.D.
District IV

To meet this requirement, School Meal Program sponsors must notify applicants and participants that (1) the purpose for collecting race and ethnicity data is to determine how effectively School Meal Programs are reaching potentially eligible students, (2) provision of this data is voluntary, (3) responses are kept confidential, and (4) responses have no effect on eligibility. Notifications must be posted on local School Food Authority or school websites no later than October 1, 2023, in a language and format that applicants and participants can understand.

Tonya S. Chestnut, Ed.D.
District V
President Pro Tem

There are situations when applicants or participants choose not to provide this information. It may be helpful to reiterate that their response has no bearing on eligibility and will be kept confidential. If the person does not provide the information, an alternative method of collecting the information must be used. Appropriate methods include using school enrollment data or direct certification data. The USDA has determined that making a judgment of race or ethnicity based on appearance is not reliable. It is no longer allowable for school personnel to use visual observation to identify race and ethnicity.

Marie Manning
District VI

If you have any questions, please contact the School Programs staff at (334) 694-4657.

Bellinda McRae
District VII

EGM/ATK/AF

Wayne Reynolds, Ed.D.
District VIII

cc: Child Nutrition Program Directors
City and County School Principals
Private School Administrators
Residential Child Care Institution Administrators
Brandon T. Payne
Angelice Lowe
Julie Autrey
Jason Swann
Susan Tudor Crowther

Eric G. Mackey, Ed.D.
Secretary and
Executive Officer

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