

I. Meals At No Charge To Students

Issue

Nutritious meals at school are not available to all students due to a variety of environmental, financial and accountability requirements.

Long Term Future

Meals at school will be available and accessible at no charge to the student as an integral component of the educational day.

Position

SNA will advocate that all children receive nutritionally adequate meals, at no charge to the child, provided through Child Nutrition Programs and funded by a combination of federal, state and local resources.

Rationale

A body of research documents the positive contribution of school nutrition programs to the health and education of children. The increasing concern for improved educational achievement challenges the nation to acknowledge the link between nutrition and education and to provide all students with access to nutritionally adequate meals at school as part of the total educational experience.

SNA advocates nutrition programs in which all students have access to meals meeting USDA nutrition standards, provided at no cost to the child at the point of service. The Association believes this can best be achieved through collaborative commitment and funding from federal, state and local sources.

SNA will conduct ongoing evaluation of the following issues within the context of current education and societal environments to identify potential areas for reform:

- Obtain funding for Meals for Achievement
- Expand the free category (eliminate reduced price meal)
- Phase in meals at no charge to students by building in percentage thresholds (example: begin at 50% eligibility by district, not by school)
- National/state or local tax on foods of minimal nutritional value to support meals at no charge to students at school
- Use foodservice generated revenues that exceed program expenditures to support meals at no charge to students in lieu of program revenues being transferred by the district as indirect costs
- Use portion of existing state sales taxes to support meals at no charge to students at school

II. Access

Issue

Too many children do not perform well academically and socially because not all children have access to or are provided adequate nutrition.

Long Term Future

Access to a variety of nutrition programs will be available to all children and no child will be denied the opportunity to participate.

Position

SNA will initiate and support collaborative efforts and legislation to eliminate barriers to participation in Child Nutrition Programs.

Rationale

SNA believes that benefits from the federal Child Nutrition Programs should be equally available to all students to promote good health and full participation in the educational process.

Student access to program benefits is frequently limited for at least two basic reasons:

- Lack of commitment in the local school and community to participate in available programs
- Barriers within the school that inhibit student participation

Frequently observed examples in schools include mealtime scheduling, competition, adequate time to eat, dining room environment and meal cost.

SNA, as the "Voice of Child Nutrition" needs to be the catalyst for building federal, state and local partnerships for removing barriers and extending full benefits of child nutrition programs to all students.

SNA will conduct ongoing evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the following child nutrition programs within the context of current education and societal environments and identify specific barriers to participation:

- Special Milk
- After-school care/meals
- Meals at no cost to students
- Adequate Time
- Alternate claiming procedures
- Expanding services

- Adequate space for eating meals
- Offer recess before lunch
- Streamlined Summer Food Service Program

III. Funding

Issue

Adequate/enough funding may not be available to ensure continuation of quality child nutrition programs for all children.

Long Term Future

A stable funding base will be established through collaborative efforts among federal, state and local entities, including supplemental funding as necessary to provide quality child nutrition programs to serve all children.

Position

SNA will initiate and support legislation and collaborative efforts among federal, state and local entities to ensure that funding is available for quality child nutrition programs to support health and development and education for all children.

Rationale

The 50-year legislative history of the federal child nutrition programs clearly shows that adequacy of funding directly influences quality programs, willingness of schools to provide the programs and levels of student participation in programs that are offered. Traditionally, the funding structure for child nutrition programs has been based upon a partnership between federal and state governments and the local school/community. SNA envisions this collaborative relationship continuing with an increased emphasis upon support from state and local schools and communities. This vision requires SNA to continue its pursuit of strong fiscal and philosophical support for programs at the federal level while expanding its collaborative, partnership building activities at the state and local levels to achieve increased fiscal and philosophical support for child nutrition programs.

SNA will conduct ongoing evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the following child nutrition programs within the context of current education and societal environments and identify areas of potential reform:

- Nutrition education
- CACFP
- After school care meals
- SAE
- State Match
- Eligibility tiers
- Breakfast expansion
- Charter schools

- Special needs
- Administrative funding
- Alternate claiming methods
- Aging facilities and equipment
- Advance/Immediate payment
- State Matching Fund Formulas and indirect costs
- Technical assistance
- Community involvement/outside contracts
- Severe need

IV. Agriculture

Issue

The relationship between agriculture and child nutrition programs needs to be reviewed in terms of meeting customer needs and evaluated in terms of efficiency and value.

Long Term Future

SNA will be an active partner in the design and ongoing review of commodity and/or agriculture assistance programs for SFA's that are based on customer needs and provide safe products that are made available through flexible, efficient processes.

Position

SNA will support America's agriculture community in its efforts to supply Child Nutrition Programs with a safe and nutritious food supply that is provided to schools through flexible and efficient procurement and delivery systems.

Rationale

The nation's agricultural community has been an integral part of Child Nutrition Programs since their inception in 1946 and SNA envisions this link continuing. Looking to the future, the Association advocates a collaborative partnership that ensures food procured for Child Nutrition Programs is nutritious, safe and available to states and schools through efficient procurement and delivery systems that respond to needs of local school consumers.

SNA will conduct ongoing evaluation of the following issues within the context of current education and societal environments to identify potential areas of reform:

- Commodity/CLOC/Cash-in-lieu
- Safety of food supply
- Commodity specifications
- Commodity delivery systems

V. School Nutritional Environment and Fiscal Integrity

Issue

Competing food sales are barriers to the establishment of an environment in which students will make healthy food choices and to the financial stability of Child Nutrition Programs.

Long Term Future

All foods available for consumption by students on school premises or at school sponsored events shall be coordinated through the school foodservice program to ensure food safety and sanitation through compliance with all applicable national, state and local regulations including nutrition integrity and fiscal accountability.

Position

SNA will advocate for change in state and federal regulations laws and policies that will safeguard the health of students and maintain financial stability in school's Child Nutrition Programs by authorizing only the food service program to sell food during the regularly scheduled meal periods.

Rationale

Current federal regulations regarding competing food sales create barriers to the establishment of an environment in which students make healthy food choices and undermines the financial stability of the Child Nutrition Programs. It is imperative that this deficiency in federal regulations be corrected and that SNA work collaboratively with states and local schools in developing policy that promotes student health, academic achievement and cost effective Child Nutrition Programs.

SNA will conduct ongoing evaluation of the following issues within the context of current education and societal environments to identify potential areas for reform:

- Areas where meals are served/consumed
- Non-nutritious foods
- Nutrition integrity
- Fiscal integrity
- Commercialization
- Exclusive Contracts

VI. Regulations

Issue

Regulations have become increasingly complex, costly to implement and unrealistic in terms of implementation. This diversion of human and financial resources in the local school to comply with regulations has diminished the direct benefits of the programs to children.

Long Term Future

Existing statutes will be carefully reviewed through a stakeholder/peer process resulting in legislation that will simplify and streamline program accountability, is consistent with SNA's vision and mission and includes a timeline, developed by stakeholders and peers, for state implementation.

Position

SNA will advocate for outcome-based regulations at the federal and state levels that are written and revised periodically, or as needed, with stakeholder involvement.

Rationale

SNA strongly supports program accountability but seeks a more realistic balance between regulatory compliance and nutrition services to children. Regulations should enhance child nutrition programs, focusing on outcomes while being timely and responsive to program needs. Stakeholder involvement in the writing, interpretation and periodic review of regulations will strengthen and improve programs in the local school.

SNA will conduct ongoing evaluation of the following issues within the context of current education and societal environments to identify potential areas for reform:

- Production Records
- Weighted Averages
- Outcome based reviews - replace CRE with quality assessment
- Changes in education standards that affect child nutrition programs
- Coordination -DOEd, HHS, USDA
- Menu Options
- Paperwork Reduction
- Confidentiality
- Nutrient analysis of planned menus vs. meals served
- Endorse and support paperwork reduction for simplified Summer Food Service Program

- Procurement language
- Nondiscrimination statement
- Appeals process
- Verification
- Consistent definition of soda water
- Cost/benefit ratio
- Food Safety/HACCP

VII. Nutrition, Food and Education

Issue

A coordinated, federally funded nutrition education program is needed.

Long Term Future

School Food Authority control of nutrition education funds will enable more tested nutrition education programs to be available to students through local employment of nutrition educators and utilization of the cafeteria and school foodservice staff as a learning laboratory and as nutrition education resources.

Position

SNA will initiate and support collaborative efforts including Federal funding to child nutrition programs to ensure a comprehensive coordinated nutrition education program in schools.

Rationale

School nutrition programs provide greatest benefits to students when they are coordinated with the total educational program and integrated with nutrition education. The school food service program supports and expands nutrition education by providing a laboratory experience where students observe and practice good eating habits consistent with information received in classroom instruction. In this coordinated educational environment, students have increased opportunity to develop dietary practices that enable academic achievement and support lifelong good health.

"Congress finds that effective dissemination of scientifically valid information to children participating or eligible to participate in the school lunch and related child nutrition programs should be encouraged."

This preamble to Section 19 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, as amended in 1976, established the Nutrition Education and Training (NET) program. It, again, reflects the intent of collaborative partnerships between local, state and federal entities in the delivery of nutrition education. Programs established with federal funds were to be "comprehensive nutrition education and training programs," that were to fully use, "as a learning laboratory" the school lunch and child nutrition programs.

Since 1976 successive Congresses have eroded the funding necessary to implement successful nutrition education programs as originally intended. SNA advocates renewal of collaborative efforts, including commitment of federal funds, to design and implement a comprehensive, coordinated nutrition education program in schools.

SNA is committed to initiating collaborative activities with federal, state and local school governments to provide an educational environment in which Nutrition Education is a

priority in the local school and is available to students by coordinating classroom instruction with the school food service program.

VIII. Nutrition Integrity

Issue

Policies ensuring the nutrition integrity of child nutrition programs are not consistently in place at state and local levels.

Long Term Future

Strong, effective child nutrition policies correlating nutritious school meals to reduction in risk of childhood chronic disease and ensuring the nutritional health of American children through provision of school meals meeting federal nutrition standards, will be in place in each state and at each local school district participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs.

Policy

SNA recommends that state and local boards of education establish policies through cooperative efforts between child nutrition professionals and other school community members, including collaboration with legislative and other government agencies, that encompass the definition and core concepts of Nutrition Integrity.

Rationale

Clearly, there is a need for greater emphasis on school meals and their relationship to health and academic performance. Stronger and more effective child nutrition policies are required by the pressing and well-documented need to reduce childhood risks for chronic disease, by the school's increasing responsibility for ensuring the nutritional health of American children, and by the relatively low cost, but high long-term health benefits of school foodservice and nutrition programs.

Nutrition Integrity is "a guaranteed level of performance that assures that all foods available in schools for children are consistent with recommended dietary allowances and dietary guidelines and, when consumed, contribute to the development of lifelong, healthy eating habits." Adherence to the following core concepts assures that nutrition integrity is met:

- Nutrition standards will be based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and The Food Guide Pyramid.
- Student preferences will be considered in menu planning. Since foods must be eaten to provide nutrients, menu changes will be gradual to ensure acceptance.
- Meals will contain adequate calories and variety of foods to support growth, development and healthy weight.
- The nutritional value of school meals will be evaluated over a period of days, rather than a single meal or food item.

- Purchasing practices will ensure the use of high-quality ingredients and prepared products to maximize flavor and acceptance. School foodservice and nutrition professionals will work with industry to develop appetizing affordable products that meet nutrition standards.
- Foods will be prepared in ways that ensure a balance between optimal nutrition and student acceptance.
- Foods offered in addition to meals will be selected to ensure optimal nutrition quality and foster healthful eating habits.
- Pleasant eating environments will be provided. This includes adequate time and space to eat school meals, positive supervision and role modeling at meal times.
- Nutrition education will be an integral part of the curriculum from preschool to twelfth grade. The school cafeteria will serve as a laboratory for applying knowledge and skills taught in the classroom.
- Professional development will be provided for school foodservice and nutrition personnel and other school community members to build teams of competent, caring individuals with common goals.
- Promoting nutrition integrity in child nutrition programs will be a cooperative effort between nutrition professionals and other school community members working with legislative and other government agencies.

