

CHAPTER 103

AN ACT concerning the promotion of, and the education of parents and guardians regarding, school meals programs that are operating, or that are subject to expansion, in the State, and amending P.L.2019, c.307.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. Section 1 of P.L.2019, c.307 (C.18A:33-27.1) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:33-27.1 "School Meal Program," development of promotional materials.

1. a. Each school food authority that provides a food service to students at a public school in the State shall, in the two languages that are most commonly spoken in the homes of students in the public school served by the school food authority:

(1) develop and implement a public education campaign to educate the parents and guardians of students at schools served by the school food authority about the various school meals programs that are available for students in New Jersey, and about the availability of free and reduced price meals, under such programs, for students who satisfy federal or State-level eligibility criteria; and

(2) develop promotional materials for the State's school meals programs, and provide copies of the promotional materials to each school that is served by the school food authority in the State, for distribution, by school staff, to the parents and guardians of students who are enrolled at the school. The school food authority shall utilize existing resources, which have been made available by the United States Department of Agriculture and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, in developing promotional materials for the purposes of this paragraph. The promotional materials developed pursuant to this paragraph shall include, but need not be limited to, pamphlets, presentation materials, webinars, and sample letters that schools may send to parents and guardians.

b. The public education campaign and promotional materials developed under subsection a. of this section shall:

(1) satisfy the standards, and comply with the guidelines, established by the Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Department of Education, pursuant to subsection c. of this section;

(2) highlight and promote the nature, purposes, value, and importance of the National School Lunch Program, the federal School Breakfast Program, the federal Summer Food Service Program and other similar summer meals programs, as well as the State's breakfast after the bell programs, established pursuant to section 1 of P.L.2014, c.66 (C.18A:33-11.1) or section 2 of P.L.2018, c.25 (C.18A:33-11.3), the State's emergency meals distribution program, established pursuant to section 1 of P.L.2020, c.6 (C.18A:33-27.2), and any new school meals programs that are implemented in the State after the effective date of P.L.2022, c.103;

(3) emphasize the importance of providing a nutritious meal to all children for their general health and success in school;

(4) emphasize and promote the ability of eligible students to obtain free or reduced price meals under the State's school meals programs, and inform parents and guardians about the various ways in which a student may be determined to be categorically eligible for free meals under these programs, and the federal and State-level income-based criteria that must be satisfied in order for a student to obtain free or reduced price school meals, under these programs, on the basis of annual household income;

(5) highlight and describe the application and determination processes that are used, by schools and school districts, to certify students for free or reduced price school meals;

(6) highlight and describe the rights that are applicable to students and families in association with a student's subsidized or unsubsidized receipt of school meals in the State; and

(7) inform parents and guardians about the nature and extent of any proposed or implemented expansion of the existing school meals programs in the State, including, but not limited to, the nature and extent of any proposed or implemented expansion of the categories of students who are eligible for free or reduced price school meals under such programs.

c. (1) Within 60 days after the effective date of P.L.2022, c.103, the Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Department of Education, shall adopt standards and guidelines to ensure the uniformity and accuracy of school meals-related information being presented by school food authorities as part of the educational campaigns conducted, and in the promotional materials distributed, pursuant to this section.

(2) Within 60 days of the effective date of P.L.2022, c.103, the Department of Education shall provide each school food authority that provides a food service to students at a public school in the State with information concerning the two languages that are most commonly spoken in the homes of students in each of the public schools that the school food authority serves. The Department of Education shall periodically, and at least every five years, verify the two languages that are most commonly spoken in the homes of students in each public school served by each school food authority.

d. As used in this section:

“School food authority” shall mean the school, school district, or third-party food service vendor, as applicable.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved September 9, 2022.