



# Report Brief

## Report Recommendations

Released:10/20/2009

**Recommendation 1.** The Food and Nutrition Service of USDA should adopt the Nutrient Targets as the scientific basis for setting standards for menu planning for school meals but should not adopt a nutrient-based standard for school meal planning and monitoring.

**Recommendation 2.** To align school meals with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and improve the healthfulness of school meals, the Food and Nutrition Service should adopt standards for menu planning that increase the amounts of fruits, vegetables and whole grains; increase the focus on reducing the amounts of saturated fat and sodium provided; and set a minimum and maximum level of calories.

**Recommendation 3.** To achieve a reasonable balance between the goals of reducing waste and preserving the nutritional integrity of school meals, the Food and Nutrition Service, in conjunction with state and local educational agencies and students, should weigh the strengths and limitations of the committee's two options when setting standards for the meals *as selected* by the student.

**Recommendation 4.** The Food and Nutrition Service, working together with state agencies, professional organizations, and industry, should provide extensive support to enable food service operators to adapt to the many changes required by revised Meal Requirements. The types of support required include the following:

- a. Technical assistance for developing and continuously improving menus, ordering appropriate foods (including the writing of specifications), and controlling costs while maintaining quality.
- b. New procedures for monitoring the quality of school meals that (1) focus on meeting relevant *Dietary Guidelines* and (2) provide information for continuous quality improvement and for mentoring food service workers to assist in performance improvement.

**Recommendation 5.** USDA should work cooperatively with Health and Human Services, the food industry, professional organizations, state agencies, advocacy groups, and parents to develop strategies and incentives to reduce the sodium content of prepared foods and to increase the availability of whole grain-rich products while maintaining acceptable palatability, cost, and safety.

**Recommendation 6.** The Food and Drug Administration should take action to require labeling for the whole grain content of food products.

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**Recommendation 7.** Relevant agencies in USDA and other federal departments should provide support for the conduct of studies to evaluate the revised Meal Requirements for the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program.

- a. USDA should continue funding for periodic School Nutrition Dietary Assessment studies, with the intermittent addition of a cost component.
- b. USDA should take the lead in providing funding to conduct well-designed short-term studies in varied school settings to better understand how the new Meal Requirements change children's total and school meal dietary intakes, student participation, food service operations, and cost.

**Recommendation 8.** The committee recommends that agencies of USDA, of other federal departments, and relevant foundations fund research studies on topics related to the implementation of the new Meal Requirements, children's acceptance of and participation in school meals, and children's health—especially the following:

- a. Effects of the recommended range of calorie levels on the adequacy of energy intakes for individual children within each of the age-grade categories
- b. Impacts of various approaches to reducing the sodium content of school meals and student acceptance of reduced-sodium foods.
- c. Impacts of various approaches to increase the acceptance of whole grain-rich products.
- d. Fruit and vegetable options and preparation methods that will increase consumption and decrease waste.
- e. Effects on cost, waste, and food and nutrient intakes of various options to govern the number and types of foods students must accept for a reimbursable meal under the *offer versus serve* provision of the law.
- f. Targeted approaches to decreasing the prevalence of nutrient inadequacy that do not require increasing the intakes of all children.
- g. Changes in child health as a result of the new standards.

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