

Schools office sets 'free milk' policy

The Rochester diocese's Catholic School Office has announced a free and reduced-price meal (free milk) policy for students in Catholic schools throughout the 12-county diocese.

The policy, effective from July 1, 1994, through June 30, 1995, sets specific eligibility criteria based upon income levels and family sizes. A chart stipulating the eligibility figures — as well as a complete copy of the policy — can be obtained from the principal's office at each of the participating schools.

Families whose incomes fall at or below the levels stipulated for their family sizes are urged to apply for free and/or reduced-price meals (or free milk) by filling out application forms that have been sent to parents. Application forms also are available from the principal's office at each school.

Applications may be submitted to the school principal at any time during the school year. Changes in employment, family income or size necessitate the submission of new applications. Information provided on application forms will be held in strict confidence and will be used only for the purpose of determining eligibility.

The school district does, however, reserve the right to verify information provided by parents at any time during the school year. If a parent declines to provide information to the school, his or her children will no longer be eligible for free or reduced-price meals (free milk).

In certain cases, foster children are also eligible for these benefits, and families interested in obtaining benefits for foster children should contact their children's schools.

Under the policy's provisions, a designated official will review applications and determine eligibility. If a parent is dissatisfied with a ruling made by the designated official, he or she may make a request — either orally or in writing — for an appeal hearing. Each school has designated an official to conduct hearings, and hearing procedures are outlined in the policy.

Prior to initiating an appeal procedure, a parent or School Food Authority may request a conference in which parents and officials may discuss the situation, present information and obtain an explanation of the data submitted in the family's application and of the decisions rendered.

A request for a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish a family's right to a fair hearing.

All questions on the application must be answered completely for the application to receive consideration by the school district. In addition, the form must be signed by a parent or guardian who certifies that the information is true and correct.

No child shall be discriminated against because of his or her race, sex, color, national origin, age or handicap. If any member of a household believes he or she had been discriminated against, he or she should write the the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

A complete copy of the policy is on file in the office of the School Food Authority District Administrator, where it may be reviewed by any interested persons.

The only diocesan school to officially inform the *Catholic Courier* of its participation in this program was All Saints Academy, 158 State St., Corning. Parents seeking to find out which other diocesan schools are taking part in the program should call the Catholic school of their choice directly.

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USDA seeks to improve school meals

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking public comment on its proposed regulations to improve school meals. The central purpose of the proposed changes is to ensure that all children have access to healthier meals at schools.

To accomplish this the USDA has proposed that all school meals meet the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans — the nation's official nutrition

policy — by the 1998 school year.

The complete text of the preamble and proposed rule appeared in the June 10 edition of the Federal Register, Part IV. The proposals represent sweeping changes to the National School Lunch Program, launched nearly 50 years ago. The proposals detailed in the regulations are based on a year of hearings and consultations.

The USDA is accepting public comments through Sept. 8, 1994.

To obtain a copy of the proposed rule check with your local library or contact the New York State Department of Education at 518/474-3852.

Written comments or requests for copies should be directed to: Food and Nutrition Service, Child Nutrition Division, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, Va. 22302.

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