USDA Child Nutrition Programs in Iowa/ Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services

Procedures for Handling a Civil Rights Complaint

1. Civil Rights complaints related to the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Afterschool Care Snack Program, Summer Food Service Program, Seamless Summer Option, or Child and Adult Care Food Program are written or verbal allegations of discrimination based on USDA protected classes of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), age, and disability.

2. Any person claiming discrimination has a right to file a complaint within 180 days of the alleged discrimination. See below for additional Iowa Civil Rights information. A civil rights complaint based on the protected classes listed in #1 above must be forwarded to the address on the nondiscrimination statement.

3. All complaints, whether written or verbal, must be accepted by the School Food Authority (SFA)/Sponsor/Organization and forwarded to USDA at the address or link on the nondiscrimination statement within 5 days of receipt. An anonymous complaint should be handled the same way as any other. Complaint forms may be developed, but their use cannot be required. If the complainant makes the allegations verbally or in a telephone conversation and is reluctant or refuses to put them in writing, the person who handles the complaint must document the description of the complaint. In addition to sending the complaint to USDA, the SFA is required to send a copy of the complaint to the State Agency (SA). The SA will log the complaint in the Iowa Civil Rights Complaint Log which is maintained by the Chief, Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services. The log is kept confidential with limited staff access.

4. There must be enough information to identify the agency or individual toward which the complaint is directed and indicate the possibility of a violation. Every effort should be made to obtain at least the following information:
   - Name, address and telephone number or other means of contacting the complainant;
   - The specific location and name of the organization delivering the program service or benefit;
   - The nature of the incident(s) or action(s) that led the complainant to feel there was discrimination;
   - The basis on which the complainant feels discrimination occurred (race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability);
   - The names, titles, and addresses of people who may have knowledge of the discriminatory action(s); and
   - The date(s) when the alleged discriminatory action(s) occurred or, if continuing, the duration of such action(s).

5. USDA is the cognizant agency for the Child Nutrition Programs listed and therefore is the first contact for the six protected classes listed in #1 above. A complainant has 180 days from the date of the alleged discriminatory act to submit a complaint. The complaint must be submitted to the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Civil Rights Division (CRD) within 5 calendar days of receipt by the State or local office. The email address for submission of a complaint is: *program.intake@usda.gov* or mail to USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave, SW, Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410. In addition to sending the complaint to USDA, the SFA is required to send a copy of the complaint to the SA. The SA will log the complaint in the Iowa Civil Rights Complaint Log.

6. In Iowa, protected classes also include sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or creed and complaints can be filed up to 300 days of occurrence. The address for Iowa complaints is: Iowa Civil Rights Commission, 6200 Park Ave, Suite 100 Des Moines, IA 50321; phone number 515-281-4121, 800-457-4416; website: https://icrc.iowa.gov/.