POLICY NOTICE

Date: August 31, 1999  Reference #: SMP 1999-05
To: Special Milk Program (SMP) Contractors
Subject: Accommodating Participants with Lactose Intolerance

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is committed to promoting the nutritional welfare of all Child Nutrition Program participants, including those with special dietary needs such as lactose intolerance. You are encouraged to consider lactose intolerance issues in program and nutrition education planning and staff training, and to respond to the needs of participants who are lactose intolerant.

Information About Lactose Intolerance

Lactose intolerance is a term used to describe difficulty in digesting lactose, the sugar found in milk and milk foods. This is due to inadequate amounts of the enzyme that breaks lactose down into simple sugars so it can be digested.

When some of the lactose is not absorbed, symptoms such as gas, bloating, cramps, nausea and/or diarrhea can occur. The symptoms can be mild to severe and can occur from 15 minutes to several hours after consuming milk and milk foods. The occurrence and severity of the symptoms is dependent on the amount of lactose a person consumes versus how much lactose that person can digest at one time. For example, some people can consume 8 ounces of milk without discomfort while others experience symptoms after only a few tablespoons of milk. A person should see their doctor if they experience frequent abdominal pain, bloating or diarrhea, or if they experience severe symptoms.

Some people experience minimal or no symptoms if they consume small, frequent portions rather than one large portion of milk, or if they consume milk and milk foods along with other foods or a meal. Other suggestions to minimize symptoms are to try whole or chocolate milk, yogurt with active cultures, ice cream and aged hard cheeses like cheddar and Swiss cheese. Some people can tolerate lactose reduced products, while others can improve their tolerance for lactose by gradually increasing the consumption of lactose containing foods.

Meeting the Child Nutrition Regulations

If you have participants in your school or facility who are lactose intolerant, you are encouraged to provide lactose reduced milk as a fluid milk choice. You are also encouraged to check with your milk supplier to determine the availability of lactose
reduced milk.

If a parent/guardian tells you, or provides you with a signed medical statement from a licensed recognized medical authority (physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner), that a participant cannot tolerate regular milk and needs lactose reduced milk, you may provide the lactose reduced milk as a creditable fluid milk. If you choose to provide the lactose reduced milk, you must do so at no extra cost to the participant. You will continue to be reimbursed according to your current rate of reimbursement.