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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-178564
CED7-408

JUN 15 1977

The Honorable Charles H. Percy
Ranking Minority Member
Select Committee on Nutrition
and Human Needs
United States Senate

Dear Senator Percy:

In your letter of March 25, 1977, you expressed support for Chairman McGovern's earlier request that we monitor the operation of the 1977 Summer Food Service Program for children. We have started our work. Based on your letter, Chairman McGovern's request, our previous work in the area, and consultations with Committee staff, we developed an overall work plan which was described to the Committee staff in a meeting on May 25, 1977. This letter describes the general aspects of the program to which we plan to direct our work and confirms the agreements reached with Committee staff.

Our overall objective is to determine how effective the administrative changes in the program for this year have been in correcting abuses and improving overall program operations, and to obtain information on the need for additional changes, both administrative and legislative. We plan to give special emphasis to the activities of the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service and the States in the pre-feeding phase of the program. We plan to do our work in New York City, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles and at the related State agencies and Service regional offices. We also plan to do some limited work in Baltimore to see how the new regulations affect a program which was relatively well-run in 1976.

We plan to cover the following program aspects in our work.

- Guidance and assistance provided by the Service to the States in interpreting the new regulations, establishing training programs for State and sponsor personnel, selecting sponsors, monitoring and evaluating program operations, and carrying out other program activities.

- Outreach efforts to get good quality sponsors into the program, including evaluation and screening, and criteria for approval--especially when more than one sponsor wants to serve a particular area.
- Training of State and sponsor personnel.
- Sponsor-vendor relationships, including bidding, contracting, contract administration, and enforcement of contract provisions.
- Program monitoring by the Service, States, and sponsors, including corrective actions taken when problems are identified.
- Procedures and practices for making advance and final payments to States and sponsors.
- Results of having schools and public agencies serve as program sponsors.

We plan to make visits to feeding sites to see how the program is being operated. We also plan to see what effect the adoption or non-adoption of the recommendations in our April 15, 1977, report on the Summer Feeding Program (CED-77-59) has had.

The Department's Office of Audit also is conducting a review of some of the same aspects of the 1977 Summer Feeding Program in some of the same locations that we plan to cover in our work. We plan to coordinate with the Department's auditors to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and disruption of program operations.

We have agreed to brief the Committee staff at the end of our work on the pre-feeding phase. We expect to issue our final report near the end of this calendar year or the first part of next year.

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We look forward to working with the Committee to help
improve this program.

Sincerely yours,

R.F. KELLER

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States