

DOCUMENT RESUME

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[Certain Food Aspects of the School Lunch Program in New York City]. CED-77-89; B-178564. June 15, 1977. 5 pp. + 3 enclosures (3 pp.).

Report to Secretary, Department of Agriculture; by Henry Eschwege, Director, Community and Economic Development Div. Request of Rep. Frederick W. Richmond.

Issue Area: Income Security Programs: Program Monitoring and Administration (1303); Food: Domestic Food Assistance Programs (1707).

Contact: Community and Economic Development Div.

Budget Function: Income Security: Public Assistance and Other Income Supplements (604).

Congressional Relevance: House Committee on Education and Labor; Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. Rep. Frederick W. Richmond.

Statistical sampling techniques were used to estimate the number of school lunches served in New York City that met or failed to meet type A requirements. Four types of lunches--cafeteria style, meal pack, basic (primarily soup and sandwiches), and bulk (prepared food frozen in bulk) were tested between January 10 and February 22, 1977. Findings/Conclusions: Between 40% and 45% of the cafeteria, meal pack, and bulk lunches and 27% of all basic lunches failed to meet the type A nutritional requirements. Many of the lunches were purchased from vendors and assembled into complete lunches by school employees. In such cases, it may be possible for the city to obtain refunds for noncompliance from the vendors. The State has never withheld program funds for noncompliance with type A lunch requirements. In the 1975-1976 school year, the total cost for the New York City lunch program was over \$79.4 million, with the Federal Government paying \$62 million, the State \$2.8 million, and the city \$14.6 million. Recommendations: The Food and Nutrition Service (Department of Agriculture) should assess the extent that this deficiency in New York City is a national problem; see that the state or city recovers from vendors; and take appropriate Federal action concerning reimbursement for nonconforming lunches. (DJM)

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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

02743

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

B-178564

JUN 15 1977

The Honorable
The Secretary of Agriculture

Dear Mr. Secretary:

At the request of Congressman Frederick W. Richmond, we are reviewing various food aspects of the school lunch program in New York City. Although our work is not complete, we note one aspect of the program requiring immediate attention and action by the Department of Agriculture. We will include additional information on the results of our review in a subsequent report.

The Department's minimum Type A lunch requirements provide the framework for nutritionally adequate school lunches and consist of specified amounts of protein-rich foods, vegetables and fruits, bread, and milk. (See enc. I.) We estimate, with 90-percent certainty, that during our test period at least 40 percent of the lunches served to children in New York City schools did not meet these nutritional requirements. Department and New York State school lunch officials need to take immediate steps to assure that lunches served in New York City, and elsewhere, meet minimum Type A requirements.

In March 1977 we briefed Department, State, and City school lunch officials and Congressman Richmond's office on the results of this aspect of our review in New York City. City officials were given access to the details supporting our findings. Details on our tests and the results follow.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Under the school lunch program, Federal subsidies are provided through the State to school districts on the basis of the number of Type A lunches reported as served to children in participating schools. In New York City about 96 million school lunches were served during the 1975-76 school year at a total cost of over \$79.4 million. Federal reimbursements were \$62 million (78 percent), State reimbursements were \$2.8 million (4 percent), and the City provided the balance of \$14.6 million (18 percent).

The school lunch program is administered by the Department's Food and Nutrition Service at the Federal level, the New York State Education Department's Bureau of School Food Management at the State level, and the New York City Board of Education's Bureau of School Lunches at the City schools. Many of the lunch components--especially for meal pack style lunches--are purchased from vendors and assembled into complete lunches by local school employees. In such cases, it may be possible for the City to obtain refunds from vendors that supplied meal components not meeting Type A requirements.

TESTING METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

We used statistical sampling techniques to estimate the number of school lunches served in New York City schools that met or failed to meet Type A requirements during our test periods. We tested each of the four types of lunches served--cafeteria style, meal pack, basic (primarily soup and sandwiches), and bulk (prepared foods frozen in bulk). The first two types were tested between January 10 and February 9, 1977; the other two, between February 10 and 22, 1977. Of the lunches served, about 57 percent were cafeteria style, 30 percent were meal pack, 7 percent were bulk, and 6 percent were basic.

Each type of lunch was tested as a separate sampling universe which enabled us to project the results to all lunches of that type served during the respective test periods.

We scientifically selected and sampled 40 cafeteria style, 40 meal pack, 16 bulk, and 16 basic lunches. Respective school lunch managers told us that each sample lunch we obtained was a Type A lunch.

Dietitians at a Veterans Administration Hospital laboratory in New York City tested the lunches for compliance with Type A requirements basically using a weight and measures test. The results are shown in the following table.

Results of Tests for Type A Lunch Compliance
in New York City Schools

<u>Lunch style</u>	<u>Total sampled</u>	<u>Passed</u>	<u>Failed</u>	<u>Area falling short of requirements</u>				
				<u>Meat</u>	<u>Vegetable</u>	<u>Meat and vegetable</u>	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Milk</u>
Cafeteria style	40	20	20	6	9	4	0	1
Meal pack	40	18	22	7	8	7	0	0
Bulk	16	6	10	3	6	1	0	0
Basic	16	9	7	1	4	2	0	0

As noted above, some of the meals had two components failing to meet minimum requirements. The amounts by which the lunches failed varied from a small part of one minimum component (vegetable), to almost two-thirds of another (meat), and to all of a third (milk).

The sample results, when projected to all lunches served during the test periods, show that:

- At least 40 percent of all cafeteria style lunches and 45 percent of all meal pack lunches served in New York City schools during the period January 10 through February 9 did not meet Type A requirements.^{1/}
- At least 45 percent of all bulk lunches and 27 percent of all basic lunches served in New York City schools during the period February 10 through 22 did not meet the Type A requirements.^{1/}

^{1/}There is 90-percent certainty that a test of every lunch served would show a failure rate at least as much as our sample results.

--Federal reimbursement for lunches not meeting the Type A requirements during the test periods could be at least \$3,718,000. (See encs. II and III.)

The Service has delegated responsibility of school lunch program monitoring to New York State. The State makes administrative reviews of program operations to see whether school districts are complying with program regulations. These reviews have been primarily concerned with school lunch participant eligibility and program accountability. On occasion, the reviews have uncovered some noncompliances with the Type A lunch requirements due to one or more missing lunch components. In such cases, Service regulations require that State agencies assure corrective action. According to a New York State school lunch official, the State assured that corrective action was taken through followup reviews. The same State official said that program funds have never been withheld from New York City because of noncompliance with Type A lunch requirements.

During a March 28, 1977, meeting held by Congressman Richmond on New York City's school lunch program, the Congressman suggested that a joint Department/State task force be formed to correct program problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

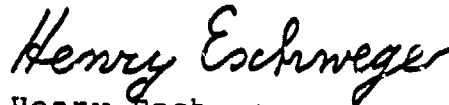
Because our projections showed that a significant number of school lunches served in New York City fell short of meeting the Department's Type A requirements, we recommend that you direct the Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service, to:

- Determine the extent to which the problem of noncompliance with the Type A lunch requirements found in New York City is a national problem requiring broad, major corrective measures.
- See that State or City officials take appropriate action to establish and collect claims against vendors furnishing meal components not meeting contract specifications.
- Take appropriate action concerning Federal reimbursement for lunches served in New York City and elsewhere that failed to meet Type A lunch requirements.

As you know, section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires the head of a Federal agency to submit a written statement on actions taken on our recommendations to the House Committee on Government Operations and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs not later than 60 days after the date of the report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report.

We are sending copies of this report to the above Committees: the House Committee on Education and Labor and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; other interested Committees and Members of Congress, including Congressman Richmond; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service; and the Director, Office of Audit.

Sincerely yours,



Henry Eschwege
Director

Enclosures - 3

The Type A Lunch Pattern . . .

The nutritional goal for school lunches is to furnish at least one-third of the Recommended Daily Dietary Allowances of the National Research Council for children of various age groups. The Type A lunch requirements provide the framework for nutritionally adequate school lunches. The kinds and amounts of foods listed in the Type A lunch pattern are based on the 1968 Recommended Daily Dietary Allowances for 10- to 12-year old boys and girls.

As specified in the National School Lunch Regulations, a Type A lunch shall contain as a minimum each of the following food components in the amounts indicated:

MEAT AND MEAT ALTERNATE

Two ounces (edible portion as served) of lean meat, poultry or fish; or two ounces of cheese; or one egg; or one-half cup of cooked dry beans or dry peas; or four tablespoons of peanut butter; or an equivalent of any combination of the above-listed foods. To be counted in meeting this requirement, these foods must be served in a main dish or in a main dish and one other menu item.

VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

Three-fourths cup serving consisting of two or more vegetables or fruits or both. A serving (¼ cup or more) of full-strength vegetable or fruit juice may be counted to meet not more than ¼ cup of this requirement.

BREAD

One slice of whole-grain or enriched bread; or a serving of other bread such as cornbread, biscuits, rolls, muffins, made of whole-grain or enriched meal or flour.

FLUID MILK

One-half pint of fluid milk as a beverage.

Add Other Foods not part of the lunch requirements as needed to complete lunches, to help improve acceptability and to provide additional food energy and other nutrients.

To help assure that all Type A lunches meet the nutritional goal, it is recommended that lunches include:

- . . . a VITAMIN A vegetable or fruit at least twice a week.
- . . . a VITAMIN C vegetable or fruit several times a week.
- . . . several foods for IRON each day.

It is also recommended that:

- . . . Fat in the Type A lunch be kept at a moderate level.
- . . . Iodized Salt be used in preparing lunches.

Since younger children are not always able to eat the amounts specified in the Type A lunch, the regulations permit serving these children lesser amounts of selected foods than are specified above. See GAO note below.

To meet the nutritional needs of teenagers, the regulations endorse encouraging the serving to older boys and girls of larger amounts of selected foods than are specified in the Type A lunch requirements.

GAO Note: For 6- to 10-year-old boys and girls, only 1/3 cup of cooked dry beans or peas, or 3 tablespoons of peanut butter are required.

Source: Food and Nutrition Service

ESTIMATE OF THE AMOUNT OF FEDERAL REIMBURSEMENT

TO BE APPLIED FOR DURING SAMPLED PERIOD

Potential estimated claim for Federal reimbursement for lunches not meeting Type A requirement
 'Lower limit at 90-percent confidence)

Average daily number of lunches served (note a)
 Reimbursement rate per lunch (note b)
 Days sampled
 Total

Lunches not meeting Type A requirement (lower limit at 90-percent confidence)
 Percent
 Number

Average daily number of lunches served (note a)

Reimbursement rate per lunch (note b)

Days sampled

Total

(cents)

Cafeteria style	324,919	40	129,968	68.9	\$ 89,548	c/23	\$2,059,597
Meal pack	171,964	45	77,384	68.9	\$ 53,317	c/23	\$1,226,301
Cafeteria style and meal pack	496,883	45	d/223,597	68.9	d/\$154,059	c/23	d/\$3,543,897
Bulk	39,075	46	17,975	68.9	\$ 12,384	e/8	\$ 99,075
Basic	36,611	27	9,885	68.9	\$ 6,811	e/8	\$ 54,486
Bulk and basic	75,586	42	d/31,788	68.9	d/\$ 21,902	e/8	d/\$ 175,216
Total							d/\$3,718,000

a/Based on the average daily number of lunches served by type in September 1976.

b/Based on data for November 1976. (See enc. Iii.)

c/Collected from January 10 to February 9, 1977.

d/Totals are statistically derived and are not cumulative.

ESTIMATE OF THE WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF
FEDERAL REIMBURSEMENT FOR EACH LUNCH

<u>Lunch reimbursement category</u>	<u>Average daily number of lunches (note a)</u>	<u>Reimbursement rate (note b)</u> (cents)	<u>Average daily reimbursement</u>
	(1)	(2)	(1) x (2)
Paid	37,985	13.25	\$ 5,033
Reduced	18,078	63.25	11,434
Free	<u>509,751</u>	73.25	<u>373,393</u>
Total	<u>565,814</u>	<u>c/68.90</u>	<u>\$389,860</u>

a/Average daily number of lunches served in November 1976.

b/Reimbursement rates for the period January to June 1977.

c/Weighted average reimbursement rate:

$$\frac{\text{Total daily reimbursement}}{\text{Total average number of lunches}} = \frac{\$389,860}{565,814} = 68.90 \text{ cents per lunch}$$