



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Food and
Nutrition
Service

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Alexandria, VA
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DATE: April 1, 2010
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SUBJECT: HealthierUS School Challenge - Monetary Incentives
TO: State Child Nutrition Directors

As you may know, USDA's HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSSC) is a voluntary national certification program that recognizes excellence in nutrition and physical activity. The Challenge is designed to bring schools closer to compliance with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) recommendations for school meals¹ and foods in schools.²

The Challenge is also a key component of the recently announced First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative to raise a healthier generation of kids (www.letsmove.gov). The initiative includes the goal of doubling the number of HUSSC schools by June 2011 and adding 1,000 more schools for each of the following two years.

The FY 2010 conference agreement from Congress provided the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) with funds to support and expand the number of HUSSC schools. The availability of monetary incentives for award winning schools was announced on March 1st by Dr. Janey Thornton, USDA's Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services during the School Nutrition Association's (SNA) Legislative Action Conference in Washington, D.C.

The monetary incentives are available to all schools that achieve HUSSC status by meeting the required criteria beginning on January 1, 2009. Schools approved as a HUSSC school under the current criteria prior to this announcement, will be eligible for the monetary incentive award.

In addition to the plaque, banner and recognition currently provided, HUSSC schools approved under the current criteria will receive the following monetary incentive awards:

- \$2,000 Gold Award of Distinction
- \$1,500 Gold
- \$1,000 Silver
- \$500 Bronze

All HUSSC award monies must be deposited into the nonprofit school food service account and used for allowable expenses under that account. The monetary incentive awards are available until the funds are depleted. USDA will process the applications in the order they are received.

We urge every State Director to champion the HUSSC initiative in their schools and use the many resources available as follows:

- A dedicated HUSSC website, accessed from teamnutrition.usda.gov
- An Application Kit with guidance and materials to lead applicants through the process
- An interactive, on-line application that simplifies and streamlines the process (healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/HUSSC)
- An on-line Competitive Foods Calculator to quickly determine if an item meets the HUSSC criteria
- Power Point Presentations with notes for administrators and foodservice staff available on-line and in Application Kit
- Information from the [Healthy Meals Resource System](#), recipes and ideas for nutrition education and physical activity
- Training available from the National Food Service Management Institute (www.nfsmi.org)

Take the leadership role and help schools in your State become award winners committed to a healthier school environment for students.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Long
Director
Child Nutrition Division

¹ IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2010. School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. (<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2009/School-Meals-Building-Blocks-for-Healthy-Children.aspx>)

² IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2007. Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way toward healthier Youth. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. (<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2007/Nutrition-Standards-for-Foods-in-Schools-Leading-the-Way-toward-Healthier-Youth.aspx>)