Civil Rights Complaint Procedures

Ouachita Parish Child Nutrition Programs

Ouachita Parish is a sponsor of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Child Nutrition Programs Nutrition Services, including the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, Afterschool Snack Program, Summer Food Service Program and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

The Ouachita Parish Child Nutrition Program provides benefits to all eligible individuals without discrimination in accordance with Federal civil rights laws and USDA policy, governed by FNS Instruction 113-1. The USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, and disability.

Program participants who feel they have been discriminated against while participating in the Child Nutrition Programs, including during the serving of meals, will be instructed to contact Jo Lynne Correro, Director of Child Nutrition Services at 318-398-1990 to voice their complaint. All complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability, either written or verbal, must be processed within the established time frames.

Right to File

Any person or representative alleging discrimination based on a prohibited basis has the right to file a complaint within **180 days** of the alleged discriminatory action. Only the Secretary of Agriculture may extend this time under special circumstances. The complainant must be advised of confidentiality and Privacy Act applications. The Director of Child Nutrition Services will not attempt to resolve the complaint themselves, without first providing the complainant with information on how they can file a complaint.

Forms

The Director of Child Nutrition Services will provide, to all persons wishing to file a complaint, instructions on where to obtain the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form. However, use of this form will not be a prerequisite for acceptance of the complaint.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish) for assistance in filing a complaint.

Filing A Complaint

The Director of Child Nutrition Services will provide instructions to the complainant on where to forward the completed USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form by:

- mail: 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

- fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- e-mail: program.intake@usda.gov.

Verbal Complaints
In the event a complainant wishes to make the allegations verbally or in person and refuses or is not inclined to place such allegations in writing, the Director of Child Nutrition Services will write up the elements of the complaint for the complainant utilizing the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form.

Acceptance of Written or Verbal
All complaints received by the Director of Child Nutrition Services, written or verbal, will be forwarded to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OCR) within 5 calendar days of receipt of the complaint. Anonymous complaints will be handled as any other complaints, to the extent feasible, based on available information.
Complaints will be forwarded to OCR via:

- mail: 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- e-mail: program.intake@usda.gov.

Ouachita Parish Child Nutrition Services will:

- maintain a copy of any correspondence regarding the complaint for at least four years after the date the complaint is closed;
- make its employees available to the FNS Civil Rights Director (CRD) to be interviewed as necessary during investigations;
- provide necessary documents as requested by the FNS CRD or the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) within the timeframes established by FNS guidance;
- participate in attempts to resolve the complaint.

State Agency Notification
If the Director of Child Nutrition Services is notified that a program participant has filed a Civil Rights complaint or they have filed a complaint on behalf of a program participant, they will notify the Louisiana Department of Education. The Director of Child Nutrition Services will provide information as requested by the LDOE during the OCR investigation of the complaint.

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A note on Louisiana protected classes: The Louisiana Constitution additionally protects individuals from discrimination based on- religion, religious ideas, beliefs, or affiliations; birth; culture; physical condition; political ideas or affiliations; and national ancestry. Please see Louisiana Constitution of 1974 Art. I, § 3. Right to Individual Dignity and Louisiana Constitution of 1974 Art. I, § 12. Freedom from Discrimination. To file a complaint, please contact the LDOE Division of Nutrition Support at 225.342.9661 or childnutritionprograms@la.gov

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Civil Rights 1400
Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.