




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendent of Schools
Executive Directors of Charter Schools
Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program

FROM: John D. Frassinelli, Division Director 
School Health, Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: September 23, 2021

SUBJECT: Rising Costs to School Child Nutrition Programs

Throughout the pandemic, food manufacturers and distributors have incurred costly shifts in their product development, packaging, and distribution to adjust to supply shortages and the continually changing needs of the consumer food industry. Additionally, the school food manufacturing and distribution industry is facing many of the same challenges other industries are facing, including staffing and labor shortages, and rising costs of materials and transportation. As a result, school food service program costs are likely to continue to rise throughout this year. School nutrition directors may be required to pay higher than normal costs to obtain the menu items necessary to provide meals that meet the requirements of the federal nutrition programs.

Through federal waivers, most of Connecticut's eligible schools have opted-in to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Seamless Summer Option of the National School Lunch Program for school year 2021-22 to provide all school meals at no cost to households. Additional federal waivers are providing higher reimbursement rates this school year for those meals to help offset the higher food and labor costs.

Please note that the issues with supply chains may impact school menus, resulting in a decrease in the availability of the usual variety of food items, and therefore requiring repeated and unpredictable last-minute adjustments to school menus and offerings. Schools should consider proactively communicating this information to students and families. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) continues to provide ongoing support to schools to implement waivers and other flexibilities to assist in navigating these challenges.

We all know access to consistent, nutritious meals is fundamentally important to all students as they learn and grow. The CSDE will continue to engage in conversations with the USDA and the school food industry on this topic, and keep you apprised of any updates.

Thank you for everything you do to keep students healthy.

JDF/sy

cc: Shannon Yearwood