

Sodium Reduction Timeline for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)

For school year 2020-21, lunches and breakfasts offered through the NSLP and SBP must meet the target 2 weekly sodium levels defined in 7 CFR 210.10(c) and 220.8(c). The previous flexibility in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements* (83 FR 63775), that allowed target 1 to continue through the end of school year (SY) 2023-24, is no longer available for school food authorities (SFAs).



The tables below indicate the previous (target 1) and current (target 2) sodium reduction targets for the NSLP and SBP. Sodium levels are listed in milligrams (mg). Meals offered on average over the week must meet the sodium target for each grade group. Target 2 is required for SY 2020-21.

Table 2. Sodium Reduction Targets for the NSLP		
Grade Group	Target 1 (mg) Meet by July 1, 2014 (SY 2014-15)	Target 2 (mg) Meet for SY 2020-21
K-5	≤ 1,230	≤ 935
6-8	≤ 1,360	≤ 1,035
9-12	≤ 1,420	≤ 1,080

Table 1. Sodium Reduction Targets for the SBP		
Grade Group	Target 1 (mg) Meet by July 1, 2014 (SY 2014-15)	Target 2 (mg) Meet for SY 2020-21
K-5	≤ 540	≤ 485
6-8	≤ 600	≤ 535
9-12	≤ 640	≤ 570

Background

On January 26, 2012, the USDA published the final rule, *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs* (77 FR 4087), which changed the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12, effective July 1, 2012. This final rule required SFAs to gradually reduce sodium in school meals to meet specific targets by specific dates. SFAs were required to meet the first sodium target by July 1, 2014 (SY 2014-15); the second by July 1, 2017 (SY 2017-18); and the third by July 1, 2022 (SY 2022-23).

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On December 12, 2018, the USDA published the final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements* (83 FR 63775), which provided more time for gradual sodium reduction in school meals. This final rule retained sodium target 1 through the end of SY 2023-24; required compliance with sodium target 2 in SY 2024-25 (which begins July 1, 2024); and eliminated the final target that would have taken effect in SY 2022-23.

On August 21, 2020, the USDA released USDA Memo SP 24-2020, CACFP 13-2020, SFSP 13-2020: *Questions and Answers for the Child Nutrition Programs during School Year 2020-2021*. Question 7 of this memo addresses the vacatur (cancellation) of the USDA's 2018 final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements* (83 FR 63775). In an April 13, 2020, decision in the Center for Science in the Public Interest et al., v. Sonny Perdue, Secretary, et al., No. 8:19-cv-01004-GLS (D. Md. 2019), the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland found a procedural error with the promulgation of 83 FR 63775, and therefore vacated (cancelled) the regulation. For this reason, the flexibilities provided in the vacated rule are no longer available to SFAs.

As a result of the vacatur of the rule in the Maryland case, the school meal patterns returned to the requirements of the 2012 final rule, *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs*. For SY 2020-2021, flavored milk must be fat-free; all grains must be whole-grain rich; and school lunches and breakfasts must meet sodium target 2, as defined in 7 CFR 210.10(c) and 220.8(c).

Resources

Lowering Sodium in School Foods (American Heart Association):

https://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@adv/documents/downloadable/ucm_472940.pdf

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Reducing Sodium in Children's Diets infographic (CDC):

<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/children-sodium/infographic.html>

Resources for the School Meal Patterns (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/ResourcesSchoolMealPatterns.pdf>

Sodium and Children (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):

https://www.cdc.gov/salt/sodium_and_children.htm

Tools for Schools: Reducing Sodium (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/tools-schools-sodium>

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USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements (83 FR 63775):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-121218>

USDA Final Rule: Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (77 FR 4087):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/fr-012612>

USDA Memo SP 24-2020, CACFP 13-2020 and SFSP 13-2020: Questions and Answers for the Child Nutrition Programs during School Year 2020-2021:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/pandemic/covid-19/questions-and-answers-child-nutrition-programs-during-sy-2020-21>

USDA Regulations 7 CFR Part 210: National School Lunch Program:

<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=4c211a738d6109939c6054a6286ac109&mc=true&node=pt7.4.210&rgn=div5s>

USDA Regulations 7 CFR Part 220: School Breakfast Program:

<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=1&SID=1efda750af767569cda912c147528a21&ty=HTML&h=L&mc=true&r=PART&n=pt7.4.220>

For more resources, visit the “[Dietary Specifications \(Nutrition Standards for School Meals\)](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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For more information, review the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) guide, *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*, and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/SodiumReductionTimelineNSLP_SBP.pdf.

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- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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