

The School Lunch Tray: February 1, 2023

Dear School Sponsors of Child Nutrition Programs:

The School Lunch Tray contains the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) weekly email notifications for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school nutrition programs. This week's topics are listed below.

Action Items

- Response Required for Operational Memorandum No. 05-23: Third Allocation of Supply Chain Assistance Funds to Alleviate Supply Chain Disruptions in the School Meal Programs: Deadline February 3, 2023

Need to Know

- Now Available: What's in a Meal Module 14: Water Availability During Meal Service
- USDA Direct Delivery Foods Update
- Change in SNAP Benefits Beginning in March 2023
- Resource Roundup: CSDE Webpage: Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs

Good to Know

- Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) Webinar: Menus of Flavor: Culinary Training with a Focus on Flavor Profiles, February 2, 2023
- Virtual Discussion with USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack: Driving Improvements in Child Health through School Meals: February 3, 2023
- Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: Summer Meals: Recruiting and Retaining Meal Sites, February 9, 2023
- Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: Summer Meals: Planning and Partnerships, February 23, 2023
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Webinar: Navigating the USDA Foods Database, March 2, 2023
- New and updated USDA Materials: Discover MyPlate: Nutrition Education for Kindergarten

Please review and share with appropriate staff members. For previous versions of the School Lunch Tray, visit the CSDE's [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage.



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Action Items

Response Required for Operational Memorandum No. 05-23: Third Allocation of Supply Chain Assistance Funds to Alleviate Supply Chain Disruptions in the School Meal Programs: Deadline February 3, 2023

To address supply chain challenges and enhance local school districts' ability to purchase foods for school meals, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has provided an additional \$ \$471.51 million in relief funding to state agencies. [Operational Memorandum No. 05-23](#) outlines how the CSDE will distribute the third allocation of Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) funds to eligible school food authorities (SFAs). These funds may only be used by SFAs to purchase unprocessed or minimally processed domestic food products for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Complete the Opt-In Survey:

SFAs electing to receive these funds must notify the CSDE of their intent to accept these funds by completing the [opt-in survey](#) by **February 3, 2023**. The survey **must be completed by the SFA's authorized signer 1 or 2**, as approved on the ED-099 Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs. Full link to survey: <https://forms.office.com/g/ZyypzLSr1r>

For additional guidance on the proper use of SCA funds, refer to *Questions and Answers: Allocation of Supply Chain Assistance (SCA) Funds to Alleviate Supply Chain Disruptions in the School Meal Programs*, at the end of [Operational Memorandum No. 08-22, Supply Chain Assistance Funds](#).

Questions may be directed to your [school nutrition team member](#).

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Need to Know

Now Available: What's in a Meal Module 14: Water Availability During Meal Service

The CSDE recently announced *What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12*, a new training program for school nutrition programs. *What's in a Meal* is a series of 16 recorded training modules that provide comprehensive guidance on complying with the meal patterns for grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. These modules are intended for school food service professionals in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO, including food service directors, managers, and staff.

The CSDE is releasing the 16 modules in stages. **Module 14: Water Availability During Meal Service** is now available on the CSDE's [Meal Pattern Training for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. The CSDE will notify school food authorities as additional modules are released.

What's in a Meal modules *released*

- 1: Introduction to Training
- 2: Introduction to School Meal Patterns
- 3: National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Meal Pattern
- 4: School Breakfast Program (SBP) Meal Pattern
- 5: Dietary Specifications
- 6: Meal Pattern Documentation
- 7: Milk Component
- 8: Meat/Meat Alternates (MMA) Component
- 9: Fruits Component
- 10: Vegetables Component
- 14: Water Availability During Meal Service (released February 1, 2023)

What's in a Meal modules *coming soon*

- 11: Grains Component
- 12: Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement
- 13: Grain Ounce Equivalents
- 15: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the NSLP
- 16: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the SBP

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USDA Direct Delivery Foods Update

Except for two truckloads of orange juice cups, all other Direct Delivery USDA Foods have been delivered to the HPC Warehouse and are ready for delivery. Recipient Agencies (RAs) should review their allocation reports closely and start making plans to take delivery of all remaining USDA foods before the end of the school year.

There are only four to five deliveries left for this school year, and summer storage at HPC will not be an option this year. As a reminder, some foods (such as the mixed dried fruit) were ordered with the CCC COVID funds that may just be appearing on the RA's allocation report. The Food Distribution Program (FDP) is also closely reviewing the inventory of Direct Delivery foods as additional requests for DoD funds or pounds at processors are received. At this time of the school year, the FDP is responsible for moving unused products from RAs to RAs that have used all their USDA Foods.

Change in SNAP Benefits Beginning in March 2023

The Department of Social Services (DSS) recently notified the CSDE that there will be a change in SNAP benefits beginning in March 2023, which will impact some households and students within your school or district. These changes may cause parents/guardians to contact schools or school nutrition programs with questions pertaining to the receipt of SNAP benefits or for **assistance with completing a free and reduced-price meal application**. Therefore, the CSDE is providing the information below to assist school food authorities (SFAs) with addressing any questions and to increase awareness around the ending of the extra SNAP benefits.

Beginning in April 2020 and continuing through the COVID-19 public health emergency, as authorized by the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020](#), Connecticut households received extra SNAP benefits (called SNAP Emergency Allotments) on their EBT cards in the middle of each month. For the past 21 months, these payments were a minimum of \$95, but averaged \$156 per household. Due to recent passing of the federal [Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023](#), these extra payments *are ending*. **The last extra COVID SNAP payment will be in February 2023.** Note that the DSS does not have control over the ending of these benefits as they are due to federal legislation.

Starting in March 2023 all SNAP households will receive only one SNAP payment the first three days of the month depending on last name and will not receive a second deposit mid-month. That amount will be their normal monthly benefit.

Households with questions regarding their EBT balance can visit www.mydss.ct.gov. This website, allows clients the opportunity to update DSS with any case changes, complete their renewals, view documents sent from DSS, or verify their case status from their computer or mobile device.

Lastly, schools and districts are encouraged to share the attached information with parents/guardians. It notifies households of the discontinuance of the SNAP Early Allotment Benefits. Additionally, the DSS [Extra COVID SNAP Benefits](#) website is a valuable resource for families with questions regarding the ending of the extra SNAP benefits.

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Note: For guidance on completing free and reduced-price meal applications, refer parents/guardians to the CSDE's video, [How to Fill Out the Application for Free and Reduced-price Meals or Free Milk](#).

Resource Roundup: CSDE Webpage: Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs

The CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage is the go-to resource for guidance and resources on crediting foods in the school meal patterns for grades K-12. This webpage includes information on the crediting and documentation requirements for commercial products and foods made from scratch. It also includes specific crediting guidance and resources for each of the five meal pattern components (milk, meat/meat alternates, vegetables, fruits, and grains).

The CSDE recently updated this webpage to include links to the applicable modules of the CSDE's [What's in a Meal training program](#).

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Good to Know

Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) Webinar: Menus of Flavor: Culinary Training with a Focus on Flavor Profiles, February 2, 2023

Menus of Flavor is intended to teach foundational culinary skills to school nutrition professionals with a focus on flavor profiles of global cuisines. Join the CICN for an introduction to flavor profiles of the Mediterranean, East and Southeast Asia, and Latin America and to discuss the impact of hands-on culinary skills training.

Date and Time: Thursday, February 2, 2023, 3:00 p.m.

Registration: https://theicn.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ugEHGtJ4Tx6nt5zXPqqvNg

Virtual Discussion with USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack: Driving Improvements in Child Health through School Meals: February 3, 2023

USDA and the Biden-Harris Administration are all in on setting children up to be healthy and thrive—and school meals are a proven tool for giving kids access to the nutrition they need to reach their bright futures. Research shows that school meals are the most nutritious food source for American children, and the strides made in school nutrition over the past decade show that healthier school meals are possible when everyone who plays a part – school nutrition professionals, parents, students, school meal partners, and the food industry – works together. USDA is committed to providing the support schools need to continue to serve the healthiest meals possible to kids. Secretary Vilsack is hosting this panel to speak directly with teachers, school nutrition directors, and parents about the path forward for advancing children’s health through school meals.

Date: Friday, February 3, 2023

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Link: usda.gov/live

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: Summer Meals: Recruiting and Retaining Meal Sites, February 9, 2023

Join FRAC’s Summer Meals: Back to Basics series to learn more about ways that sponsors can recruit new sites as well as retain sites from one summer to the next. Speakers will share how to handle unexpected challenges and best practices for recruiting new sites in underserved areas.

Date and Time: Thursday, February 9, 2023, 3:00 p.m.

Registration: https://uso2web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_klv1l_axSVKCPfUiL3kLjQ

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Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: Summer Meals: Planning and Partnerships, February 23, 2023

Planning and partnerships are key components to increasing participation at summer sites. FRAC's Summer Meals: Back to Basics will explore best practices for bringing partners to the table, identifying underserved areas, and the best way to maximize your program impact. Hear from partners that have fostered new partnerships and built momentum behind their summer meals expansion efforts.

Date and Time: Thursday, February 23, 2023, 3:00 p.m.

Registration: https://uso2web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_El_qq-65SluGkSYWy4ehjg

USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Webinar: Navigating the USDA Foods Database, March 2, 2023

This webinar will provide instructions for state agencies and school districts on how to navigate the [USDA Foods Database](#) to access vendor-specific product information, including nutrients, allergens, ingredients, and certifications. FNS will share important resources to help utilize the USDA Foods Database, including release notes, step-by-step written instructions, FAQs, and other useful information. The webinar will include a live Q&A about the USDA Foods Database.

Date and time: Thursday, March 2, 2023, from 2:00-3:00 pm

Registration: Attendees must [register](#) in advance to attend the webinar.

Joining the webinar: On the day of the webinar, attendees can join using one of the following options:

- *Join from the event link:* <https://usda-fns.webex.com/usda-fns/onstage/g.php?MTID=e64ca43a47d2f261cc0284a99e263cdf0>
- *Join by the event number:*
Event number (access code): 2762 306 9419
Event password: JnXNmRq3D28
- *Join by phone*
+1-415-527-5035 US Toll
+1-929-251-9612 USA Toll 2
Access Code: 2762 306 9419

For assistance, visit <https://help.webex.com>

Note: This database will **replace** the [USDA Foods in Schools Product Information Sheets](#) as of next school year.

New and updated USDA Materials: Discover MyPlate: Nutrition Education for Kindergarten

New and updated [Discover MyPlate: Nutrition Education for Kindergarten](#) materials are now available from USDA's Team Nutrition initiative. Team Nutrition expanded these resources to include additional foods, Spanish-language components, and new materials showing where food comes from. These resources foster the development of healthy food choices and physically active lifestyles during a critical developmental and learning period for children—*kindergarten*.



For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, School Health, Nutrition and Family Services, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SLT/2023/SLT_02_01_2023.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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After February, your extra SNAP Benefits Will End

This letter is to tell you that the extra amount of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that you receive will **end after February 2023**.

Why are your extra benefits ending?

Congress temporarily increased SNAP benefits because of the COVID-19 public health emergency. This means you have been getting at least \$95.00 more in SNAP benefits on your EBT card each month than you normally would. Recently, Congress passed a bill ending these benefits effective February 2023.

In **March 2023**, your monthly benefit amount will return to your normal SNAP amount, and you will not see a second deposit in the middle of the month.

DSS does not have control over this change as it is a result of federal legislation.

What do you need to do?

You do not need to do anything. We are just letting you know that the extra benefits are ending. You will continue to receive SNAP until the end of your renewal period unless you report changes that make you ineligible or fail to return any documents we request. When you need to renew your benefits, we will send you another notice with instructions on how to do so.

How to check the benefits on your EBT card

To check the balance on your Connect EBT card, visit myDSS.ct.gov or call 1-888-328-2666.

Remember, in **March 2023** you will not see a second deposit in the middle of the month.

If you have other questions

If you have questions or need more information, please visit our website, www.ct.gov/snap/extracovidbenefits.

You may also call us at 1-855-626-6632, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Closed Wednesday)

If you need more help with food

If you need more help with food, please contact 2-1-1 to find your local food bank or food pantry.

Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and have a TTD/TTY device can contact DSS at 1-800-842-4524. Persons who are blind or visually impaired, can contact DSS at 1-860-424-5040.