

The School Lunch Tray: March 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

- Reminder: Orders for USDA Foods for School Year 2023-24 Due March 10, 2023
- Operational Memorandum No. 07-23: Interschool Agreements for School Year 2023-24: Due July 1, 2023 (Full Service) or August 30, 2023 (Vended)
- Operational Memorandum No. 08-23: Process for Submitting the HFC Statement for School Year 2023-24: Due July 1, 2023

Need to Know

- Recording Available: CSDE's Information Session for School Meals Assistance Revenue for Transition (SMART) Funds 2.0
- USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Update
- School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) March Menu Madness Event: March 15, 2023
- Resource Roundup: Using Excess Funds to Improve Programs with Farm to School

Good to Know

- March is National Nutrition Month
- Available in Print: USDA School Breakfast Photo Props
- Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals Deadline March 31, 2023

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.



The School Lunch Tray: March 1, 2023

Action Items

Reminder: Orders for USDA Foods for School Year 2023-24 Due March 10, 2023

The school year 2023-24 USDA Foods catalog is now open in Web Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM). The deadline to place orders in WBSCM is March 10, 2023. Please carefully review and follow the CSDE's [Instructions for Ordering USDA Foods for School Year 2023-24](#). This document and the [USDA Foods Ordering Worksheets for School Year 2023-24](#) are available in the "[WBSCM](#)" section of the CSDE's FDP webpage.

The FDP team has two remaining USDA Foods Office Hours for questions and assistance with placing orders; [Friday March 3, 2023, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.](#), and [Tuesday March 7, 2023 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.](#)

For questions, please contact the [FDP staff](#).

Operational Memorandum No. 07-23: Interschool Agreements for School Year 2023-24: Due July 1, 2023 (Full Service) or August 30, 2023 (Vended)

[Operational Memorandum No. 07-23: Interschool Agreements for School Year 2023-24](#) is now available on the CSDE's [School Nutrition Operational Memos 2023](#) webpage. Sponsors that sell USDA meals or Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) snacks to another district or school during school year 2023-24 must complete and submit an interschool agreement to the CSDE.

- The **Full-service Interschool Agreement form** must be submitted to the CSDE by **July 1, 2023**.
- The **Recipient Site Vended Interschool Agreements** must be submitted to the CSDE at least two weeks before the start of the school year, but no later than **August 30, 2023**.

The interschool agreement forms are available under "I" on the CSDE's [Forms for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

The School Lunch Tray: March 1, 2023

Operational Memorandum No. 08-23: Process for Submitting the HFC Statement for School Year 2023-24: Due July 1, 2023

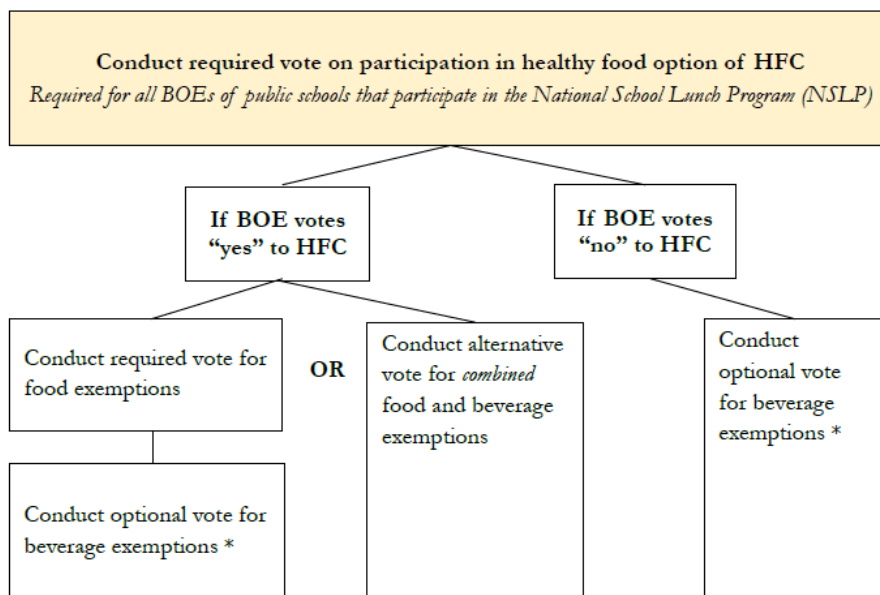
Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that each local board of education or governing authority (BOE) for all Connecticut public school districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must **take action annually** to certify whether all food items sold to students will or will not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards. This includes all public schools, regional educational service centers, the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), charter schools, interdistrict magnet schools, and endowed academies.

[Operational Memorandum No. 08-23: Requirements for Submitting the HFC Statement for School Year 2023-24](#) is now available on the CSDE's [School Nutrition Operational Memos 2023](#) webpage. This memo provides the required motion language and summarizes the **steps that districts must take now** to ensure the accurate and timely submission of the 2023-24 HFC Statement by the deadline of **July 1, 2023**.

- All BOEs must vote on whether to participate in the healthy food option of HFC.
- If the BOE votes “yes” to the healthy food option, a vote on whether to allow **food exemptions** is required. The BOE may also choose to vote on whether to allow **beverage exemptions**.
- If the BOE votes “no” to the healthy food option, a vote on whether to allow food exemptions is not required. The BOE may choose to vote on whether to allow **beverage exemptions**.

The chart below summarizes the BOE votes. Training on the HFC application process is available in the CSDE's recorded training module, [Completing the Application Process for HFC](#).

Summary of BOE Votes



* Beverage exemptions are defined by a separate statute (C.G.S. Section 10-221q) and are not part of the annual HFC Statement. BOEs may choose whether to allow beverage exemptions. If the BOE does not vote to allow beverage exemptions, noncompliant beverages cannot be sold to students on school premises at any time.

The School Lunch Tray: March 1, 2023

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Recording Available: CSDE's Information Session for School Meals Assistance Revenue for Transition (SMART) Funds 2.0

The webinar recording and PowerPoint slides from the CSDE's SMART Funds 2.0 webinar on February 24, 2023, are now available in the "How To" section of the CSDE's [Operating Child Nutrition Programs during COVID-19](#) webpage.

USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Update

As a reminder, districts that have funds in FFAVORS for this school year but have not started using these funds, must start placing orders, or funds may be moved to another district. A significant amount of additional funding is available for the DoD Program this school year. If your district is getting low on funds (less than 10 percent remaining), please reach out to the [Food Distribution Program \(FDP\) staff](#) to request additional funding. Districts that are not currently participating in the DoD Program but would like to participate may submit a request to the FDP staff.

School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) March Menu Madness Event: March 15, 2023

SNACT's March Menu Madness event will be held at the Aquaturf Club in Plantsville, Connecticut, to help school food service professionals rethink, reinvent, and refresh their menus. The morning agenda includes a legislative panel, an update from the CSDE, and a farm to school session. The afternoon trade show has over 60 exhibitors, offering new products, menu ideas, information on how to use USDA foods, scratch cooking, breakfast and lunch menu ideas, new items, and special menu ideas such as celebration days, recipes, and more.

- *Information and registration:* <https://snact.org/page/MMM-Conference>
 - *Registration deadline:* Friday March 10, 2023
 - To attend the trade show only, please contact execdir@snact.org.
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The School Lunch Tray: March 1, 2023

List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages: Updated March 1, 2023

Updated lists of foods and beverages are now available on the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage. New products on the lists are indicated by pink highlighting on the manufacturer and product name. Items that have been **added or deleted** since the last update are listed on the CSDE's document, [Summary of Updates to Approved Food and Beverages](#).

These lists identify foods that comply with Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) and beverages that comply with the state beverage statute (Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes) and the USDA Smart Snacks beverage standards. Foods on this list also comply with Smart Snacks because the CNS requirements are stricter than the Smart Snacks food standards. For additional guidance, visit the "[How To Evaluate Foods for CNS Compliance](#)" section of the CSDE's Connecticut Nutrition Standards webpage.

Resource Roundup: Using Excess Funds to Improve Programs with Farm to School

School nutrition program funds must be used to operate and improve the school food service program. The USDA requires that school food authorities (SFAs) must maintain a financially sound nonprofit food service account. As a reminder, SFAs that exceed three month's average expenditures must reduce their excess operating balance and submit a plan to the CSDE (refer to the CSDE's [Plan for Reducing Excess Operating Balance](#) and guide, [Financial Management Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs](#)).

The CSDE encourages SFAs to use innovative ways of meeting the financial goals of the school nutrition programs. Farm to school activities and education can improve school food service operations by:

- improving student attitudes towards fruits and vegetables;
- increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables;
- improving job satisfaction and staff retention;
- providing quality fresh product; and
- increasing school meal participation.

Farm to school and school gardens provide a unique opportunity for SFAs to use excess nonprofit food service account funds. The CSDE's [Farm to School](#) webpage has resources to help SFAs get started or increase their farm to school efforts, including [Connecticut Farm to School Resources](#) and guidance on the allowable expenses for farm to school and school garden activities ([USDA Memo SP 06-2015: Farm to School and School Garden Expense](#)). Additionally, the [Put Local on Your Tray](#) and [Connecticut Farm to School Collaborative](#) are supporting farm to school efforts throughout the state.

Good to Know

March is National Nutrition Month

Celebrate National Nutrition Month this March. For more information and resources, visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' [National Nutrition Month®](#) webpage.

Available in Print: USDA School Breakfast Photo Props

Printed copies of the [School Breakfast Photo Props](#) are now available from the USDA's Team Nutrition initiative. Schools can use these colorful props to add fun and excitement to school breakfast events during National School Breakfast Week, as well as other activities or celebrations throughout the school year. Each kit includes 40 fun images of breakfast foods, comment bubbles, and signs printed on perforated cardstock.

Schools participating in USDA's Child Nutrition Programs may request free print copies while supplies last, at <https://pueblo.gpo.gov/TN/TNPubs.php?PubID=15628>.

Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals Deadline March 31, 2023

The Connecticut Dairy and New England Dairy are pleased to announce a funding opportunity from Connecticut Dairy Farmers to eligible schools in Connecticut to support food service needs related to expanding summer or school meal programs or serving new dairy menu items in the fall of 2023. New for 2023, schools can apply for the new resources below.

- [Turn-key Bulk Milk Dispenser kit](#)
- [Turn-key hot chocolate milk kit](#)
- [turn-key smoothie kit](#)

Visit New England Dairy's [School Meals](#) webpage for the application and more details. The application deadline is March 31, 2023.

Funding for this program is provided by the Connecticut Milk Promotion Board and New England Dairy.



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, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SLT/2023/SLT_03_01_2023.pdf.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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