

The School Lunch Tray: August 30, 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: Mandatory Tutorial for NSLP Sponsor and Site Application: August 31, 2023

Need to Know

- Updated CSDE Parent Video for School Year 2023-24: How to Fill Out the Application for Free and Reduced-price Meals or Free Milk
- Information for School Food Authorities (SFAs) Participating in the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP)
- Updated CSDE Offer versus Serve (OVS) Resources for School Year 2023-24
- Reminder: Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program
- New CSDE Resource: Signage Requirements for the NSLP and SBP
- List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages: Updated August 30, 2023
- New Products that Meet USDA's Requirements for Fluid Milk Substitutes for Children without a Disability
- Updated CSDE Guide: Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12
- Next Table Talk: Thursday, September 7, 2023
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- Resource Roundup: Fact Sheet: Direct Certification through SNAP, TFA and Medicaid

Good to Know

- SNACT's 74th Conference & Industry Show: Building the Future of Child Nutrition, October 13-14, 2023
- Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: Back to Basics with School Breakfast! A Deep Dive on Breakfast After the Bell, September 9, 2023
- CSDE's Talk Tuesdays Training Sessions: Attendance and Engagement System of Support and Professional Communities

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

Reminder: Mandatory Tutorial for NSLP Sponsor and Site Application: August 31, 2023

The CSDE's mandatory interactive training session on how to submit the NSLP application for school year 2023-24 will be held on **Thursday, August 31, 2023**, from 2:00– 3:30 p.m. This session is required for all staff responsible for completing and submitting the annual NSLP application.

This training session assists sponsors with a speedy and successful application approval process. The CSDE will walk through each step of the application process to ensure that the sponsor and site application are completed accurately, and correct documentation is uploaded into the checklist summary. To prepare for this session, please be familiar with the documents and weblinks below and have them available during the training.

1. CSDE's instructions: [Updating the Sponsor Application for School Nutrition Program](#)
2. Applicable documents for the NSLP application, e.g., policy statement, public release, and parent/guardian notification letters. For a list of the required documents, refer to the CSDE's Instructions Checklist Summary: [Required Items for the Online Sponsor Application "Checklist Summary."](#)
3. Access to the [Online Application and Claiming System for Connecticut Child Nutrition Programs \(CNP System\)](#).

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Need to Know

Updated CSDE Parent Video for School Year 2023-24: How to Fill Out the Application for Free and Reduced-price Meals or Free Milk

The CSDE's 18-minute video for parents and guardians of schoolchildren, [How to Fill Out the Application for Free and Reduced-price Meals or Free Milk](#), is updated for school year 2023-24. This video provides step-by-step guidance on how to complete the Application for Free and Reduced-price School Meals or Free Milk. This video is posted on the [Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and [Special Milk Program \(SMP\)](#) webpage. The CSDE encourages school food authorities to provide a link to this video on their school nutrition programs webpage and share with parents and guardians via other applicable communication methods, such as the application packet for school meals, menu backs, district e-mail updates, and newsletters.

Information for School Food Authorities (SFAs) Participating in the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP)

The CSDE welcomes all districts that accepted LFSIP phase 1 funding. A group of technical assistance (TA) members is meeting now to divide up the many requests for assistance that were submitted as part of the attestation. In the next few weeks, SFAs will be contacted by a TA team member who will assist with requests and answering any questions for getting started.

Every SFA (including those that did not request assistance on the LFSIP attestation) will be assigned a TA team member to contact for assistance at any time. As a reminder, UCONN's Put Local on Your Tray has a webpage dedicated to [Local Food for Schools Program](#). Check this webpage frequently as new resources will continue to be added.

Producers have been notified, resources developed, and information sessions offered. More materials and opportunities for office hours are coming soon. For questions, contact Monica Pacheco at monica.pacheco@ct.gov.

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Updated CSDE Offer versus Serve (OVS) Resources for School Year 2023-24

The CSDE's [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#) for school year 2023-24 is now available. This guide contains comprehensive information and resources for implementing the USDA's OVS provision for grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. The OVS summary handouts below are also updated.

- [Overview of OVS in the National School Lunch Program](#)
- [Overview of OVS in the School Breakfast Program](#)

These resources are available on the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

New CSDE Resource: Signage Requirements for the NSLP and SBP

As a reminder, the USDA regulations for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) require all school food authorities (SFA) to post cafeteria signage that provides clear information about the daily planned reimbursable meals and all allowable choices. The purpose of this signage is to prevent unintentional purchases of a la carte items and help students choose a reimbursable meal.

SFAs must post two different types of cafeteria signage to clearly communicate the food components for each daily menu choice and indicate what students must select for a reimbursable meal.

1. **Identify foods and amounts offered for all planned reimbursable meals:** All SFAs must post signage at the beginning of each serving line to identify the foods and amounts offered for all planned reimbursable meals. This requirement applies to all schools and institutions, including those that do not implement offer versus serve (OVS) and those that implement family-style meal service.
2. **Identify required student selections for reimbursable meals with OVS:** SFAs that implement OVS must post signage to indicate the minimum amount of each food component (lunch) or food item (breakfast) that students must select for a reimbursable meal, based on the planned daily menu for each grade group. This signage must be posted at all applicable points in the serving line where the food components or food items are available.

For guidance on meeting these requirements, refer to the CSDE's new resource, [Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#). For resources on signage for OVS, visit the "[Signage for OVS](#)" section of the CSDE's Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

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List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages: Updated August 30, 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.

New Products that Meet USDA's Requirements for Fluid Milk Substitutes for Children without a Disability

The August 30, 2023, update of the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) includes three new products that meet the USDA's requirements for fluid milk substitutes for children without a disability. An oat-based nondairy milk beverage that meets the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes has been added to [list 17](#) and two lactose-free milks have been added to [list 16](#).

As a reminder, nondairy milk substitutes that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes and lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk are the only two allowable types of milk substitutes for children whose dietary needs do not constitute a disability. For guidance on the requirements for milk substitutes, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs](#).

Updated CSDE Guide: Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

An updated version of the CSDE's guide, [Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#), is now available for school year 2023-24. This guide contains comprehensive information on the whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement and crediting criteria for the school nutrition programs for grades K-12 and the WGR criteria of the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS). Topics include:

- the crediting and serving size requirements for the grains component;
- the WGR criteria for commercial grain products and grain foods made from scratch;
- the required crediting documentation for WGR foods;
- examples of how to evaluate commercial grain products and standardized recipes for WGR compliance; and
- how to evaluate the accuracy of a manufacturer's product formulation statement (PFS) for commercial grain products.

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This resource is available in the “[Whole Grain-rich Requirement](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Next Table Talk: Thursday, September 7, 2023

On Thursday, September 7, 2023, CSDE will be joined by the UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health for the second webinar in the two-part series on the triennial assessment of local school wellness policies. This session will introduce three new videos on wellness policy implementation.

- [Video 1 Implementing school wellness policies: Connecting nutrition education and school food environment](#)
- [Video 2 Implementing school wellness policies: Not using food as a reward](#)
- [Video 3 Implementing school wellness policies: Culturally inclusive practices in wellness activities](#)

To submit questions in advance, visit

https://sdect.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5px5YKVBdQNQZDo.

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Important Reminder: Disaster Preparedness for School Food Authorities (SFAs)

The [USDA Foods Program Disaster Manual](#) and the Connecticut State Department of Education Food Distribution Program (CSDE FDP) document, [Disaster Feeding Guidance for School Food Authorities Using USDA Foods](#), address a SFA's response to disasters. Please review and share with appropriate staff. If there is a Presidential declaration, HPC Foodservice will have priority to assist the State of Connecticut.

The USDA's [The Food Safety Emergency Response Pocket Guide](#) (also available in Spanish) supports school food service professionals in their response to food safety emergencies caused by disasters and weather-related events. Additional resources include [Fact Sheet, USDA Foods During Disaster](#) and the USDA webinar, [Use of USDA Foods in Disasters](#).

SFAs may be called upon by town officials or the Red Cross to serve food to the public through congregate feeding. SFAs that use USDA Foods must keep records of the USDA Foods used and any transportation costs. If there is a Presidential declaration, the CSDE FDP will work with SFAs on the USDA application process for replacement and reimbursement. The USDA provides replacement in situations of distress only to the extent that Food and Nutrition Service funds are available. Please keep the CSDE FDP informed if your district opens shelters that involve congregate feeding. Email Monica Pacheco at monica.pacheco@ct.gov or Allison Calhoun-White at allison.calhoun-white@ct.gov.

Resource Roundup: Fact Sheet: Direct Certification through SNAP, TFA and Medicaid

The CSDE's [Fact Sheet: Direct Certification through SNAP, TFA, and Medicaid](#) provides important information to help address clients' questions related to free and reduced-price school meal benefits through direct certification only. Please review and share with appropriate stake holders.

Good to Know

SNACT's 74th Conference & Industry Show: Building the Future of Child Nutrition, October 13-14, 2023

SNACT will hold its annual Conference & Industry Show: Building the Future of Child Nutrition, on October 13-14, 2023, at Mohegan Sun. This event features presentations from two national speakers, John Colby and Janice Watt, a CSDE update, the Food & Industry Trade Show with over 100 vendors, and networking opportunities with directors, industry, staff, and business managers from around the state. For details, refer to the SNACT 2023 [agenda](#), [registration information](#), and [conference rates](#). For questions about registration, email execdir@snact.org

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: Back to Basics with School Breakfast! A Deep Dive on Breakfast After the Bell, September 9, 2023

The School Breakfast Program supports student health and learning, improves school attendance, and decreases tardiness; however, traditional breakfast models, where breakfast is served before the start of the school day, creates barriers to participation. Breakfast After the Bell, where breakfast is incorporated into the school day, is an effective way to increase students' access to this healthy morning meal. Join the Food Research & Action Center for a 30-minute deep dive into best practices for Breakfast After the Bell.

Date and time: September 9, 2023, 3:00 p.m.

Registration: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

CSDE's Talk Tuesdays Training Sessions: Attendance and Engagement System of Support and Professional Communities

Talk Tuesdays are biweekly “drop-in” virtual opportunities that engage state agency, district, and school staff in an open dialogue around student attendance and engagement. Kicking off its fourth year, Talk Tuesdays are a popular venue for staying current on new research, what's new, and what works. Sessions are held virtually on alternating Tuesday mornings from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m., beginning Tuesday, September 19, 2023. To register for the year, refer to the attached flier. Previous sessions are available on the CSDE's [Talk Tuesdays](#) webpage.



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_08_30_2023.pdf.

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