

The School Lunch Tray: September 20, 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

- Verification Must Be Completed by November 15, 2023

Need to Know

- Updates for the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP)
- USDA Foods Update on Beef Fine Ground, Material Code #100158
- UCONN Early College Experience (ECE) Fee Waiver Policy and Free and Reduced-price Eligibility Information
- Updated Nonprogram Pricing Worksheets for Adult Meals for School Year 2023-24
- Updated Pricing Worksheet for A La Carte Sales in School Nutrition Programs
- New CSDE Resource: A la Carte Food Cost and Price Charged Comparison Worksheet
- Clarification on the Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Older Grades Eating Together (Co-mingling)
- Updated CSDE Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns
- Governor Announces Special Issuance of Summer P-EBT Payments
- Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week: October 2-6, 2023
- Resource Roundup: UConn Rudd Center's Implementing School Wellness Policies Video 3: Culturally inclusive wellness

Good to Know

- New Resources for Food Safety Education Month: USDA Food Safety Fact Sheets
- Food Research & Action Center Webinar: Advocates: A Key Ingredient to School Meal Success, September 21, 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.



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Action Items

Verification Must Be Completed by November 15, 2023

This is a reminder that the verification process begins October 1 and **must** be completed by **November 15**. The CSDE verification webinar, *Building Success: What You Need to Know About Verification*, PowerPoint handout, and related handouts are available in the “[Related Resources](#)” section of the CSDE’s Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Information regarding verification is available on the CSDE’s [Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. The verification forms are available in the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section.

Two important documents that assist in the verification process include the CSDE’s [Calendar for Completing Verification](#) and [Important Points for Completing Verification](#). Additionally, the USDA [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#), provides an overview of the verification process.

Need to Know

No Table Talk on Thursday, September 21, 2023

Table Talk will not be held on Thursday, September 21, 2023. It will resume on Thursday, October 5, 2023.

Child Nutrition Program Online Application and Claiming System (CNP System) Update for August Claims for Reimbursement

Please review the important information below regarding submission of the school food authority’s (SFA) August 2023 monthly claims for reimbursement in the CNP System.

- **Combining August and September’s Claim for Reimbursement:** SFAs participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and Special Milk Program (SMP) with 10 operating days or less in August 2023 may combine their August meal counts with their September 2023 meal counts. This does **not** include August 2023 claims for SFAs that operated the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP in August 2023.
- **School Year (SY) 2023-24 CNP Sponsor Applications;** The SY 2023-24 Sponsor Agreements were due Friday, September 15, 2023, and take time for the CSDE schools team to review and approve. Claims for July and/or August 2023 cannot be entered or certified without an approved agreement.
- **August 2023 claims submission deadline:** The CNP System will remain open for the submission of July and/or August 2023 claims submission through Friday, September 22, 2023.

Please share this information with all CNP System claim preparers and certifiers as appropriate.

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Updates for the Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP)

The Technical Assistance Advisors are finalizing preparations and will be reaching out to LFSIP Phase 1 participants who requested assistance with sourcing local producers/products. For participants who have been making purchases, the Monthly Reporting Form will be provided soon to complete and submit for reimbursement. The first submission will cover August and September purchases.

Office hours will be offered every other Tuesday, from 2:00 - 3:00 p.m., starting October 10, 2023. A member of the LFSIP team will be available during these hours to answer any questions and provide assistance. These office hours will be informal; no presentation is planned. Participants may come in and out throughout the hour or stay the entire time to hear the discussions.

USDA Foods Update on Beef Fine Ground, Material Code #100158

Orders of Beef, Fine Ground, Material Code #100158, that were expected for delivery by August 31, 2023, now have an expected delivery date of October 4 and 5, 2023. As a reminder, running a weekly Requisition Status Report in WBSCM until all foods are either received into the state warehouse or canceled will provide you with the most updated information on your district's USDA Foods orders.

Material	Material description	Original delivery date	Sales order number	Sales order, item number	Notes
100158	Beef Fine Ground Frz Ctn-40 Lb	8/31/2023	5000834437	100	Now expected on 10/4/2023
100158	Beef Fine Ground Frz Ctn-40 Lb	8/31/2023	5000834437	200	Now expected on 10/5/2023

UConn Early College Experience (ECE) Fee Waiver Policy and Free and Reduced-price Eligibility Information

Last June, the UConn ECE program notified school districts regarding the new fee waiver process for the upcoming 2023-24 school year. The Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs has received questions regarding whether a completed *Addendum A: Sharing Information with Other Programs* document is required by parents/guardians for the determining official to release the free and reduced-priced information for the purpose of waiving the ECE fee.

The UConn ECE program (refer to attachment) is defined by the CSDE as a dual credit program and as such is considered a **state education program** and part of the state's federal accountability system. This designation allows districts to share student eligibility data with authorized ECE partner school site representatives to verify student fee waiver eligibility. Therefore, determining officials may share a student's free or reduced-price eligibility determination **without** receiving prior parental consent or using the *Addendum A: Sharing Information with Other Programs* document. However,

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for audit purposes, determining officials **must still require completion** of the CSDE's [Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Programs form](#) by all persons requesting the data for the purpose of the ECE fee waiver.

Updated Nonprogram Pricing Worksheets for Adult Meals for School Year 2023-24

An updated version of the CSDE's [Nonprogram Pricing Worksheets for Adult Meals](#) is available for school year 2023-24. This Excel document contains two worksheets to determine the breakfast and lunch price for adult meals:

- Worksheet 1: Pricing of Adult Meals in School Nutrition Programs
- Worksheet 2: Pricing of Adult Meals in Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Schools

As a reminder, Section [7 CFR 210.14 \(f\)](#) of the NSLP regulations requires that the revenue from the sale of nonprogram foods covers the cost of the food and is not subsidized through federal reimbursement. "Nonprogram foods" include any nonreimbursable foods and beverages purchased using funds from the NSFS. For more information on nonprogram foods, visit the "[Nonprogram Foods](#)" section of the CSDE's [Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Updated Pricing Worksheet for A La Carte Sales in School Nutrition Programs

An updated version of the CSDE's [Nonprogram Pricing Worksheets for Adult Meals](#) is available for school year 2023-24. This Excel worksheet determines the correct pricing of a la carte items to meet a SFA's desired food cost percentage. For more information on nonprogram foods, visit the "[Nonprogram Foods](#)" section of the CSDE's [Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs](#).

New CSDE Resource: A la Carte Food Cost and Price Charged Comparison Worksheet

A la carte pricing of foods and beverages in the school nutrition programs should not create an incentive for students to choose a la carte items because the price is less than a reimbursable meal. A la carte prices must cover the cost of producing the food or beverage item, such as food cost, labor, and indirect costs. The CSDE's new [A la Carte Food Cost and Price Charged Comparison Worksheet](#) helps school food authorities (SFAs) demonstrate that the price charged for each a la carte food and beverage item covers all costs of producing the item. For more information on nonprogram foods, visit the "[Nonprogram Foods](#)" section of the CSDE's [Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs](#).

Clarification on the Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Older Grades Eating Together (Co-mingling)

“Co-mingling” is the practice of serving meals to a variety of grades in the same service area at the same time, such as preschoolers and grades K-5 or preschoolers and grades K-8. When students are co-mingled, the school may use the meal pattern of the older grades for both grade groups if the following criteria are met:

- the preschoolers and students from older grade groups (such as K-5, K-8, or K-12) eat together in the same place at the same time;
- it is hard to tell the preschoolers from older students; and
- it would be operationally difficult to serve different foods or different amounts of foods during the combined meal service.

For example, when preschoolers and grades K-5 eat lunch or breakfast in the same service area at the same time, SFAs may choose to follow the K-5 meal pattern for both groups. When preschoolers and grades K-12 eat ASP snack in the same service area at the same time, SFAs may choose to follow the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 for both groups.

SFAs must follow the preschool meal patterns when meals are served to preschoolers in a different area or at a different time than older grades. The USDA allows the option to serve the meal pattern of the older grades to preschoolers only when meals are served to preschoolers and older grades in the same service area at the same time.

Note: The preschool meal patterns provide the amounts and types of foods that most younger children need for healthy growth and development. The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to find ways to serve grade-appropriate meals and ASP snacks to preschoolers and older students to best address their nutritional needs. For additional guidance, refer to the USDA’s resource, [Serving School Meals to Preschoolers](#), and visit the “[Preschoolers Eating with Other Grades \(Comingled Meals\)](#)” section of the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Updated CSDE Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns

The CSDE resources below have been updated to provide additional guidance on the meal pattern requirements for preschoolers and older grades eating together (co-mingling).

- [Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#)
- [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the Afterschool Snack Program of the NSLP](#)
- [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschoolers and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)
- [Crediting Yogurt for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#)

These resources are dated September 2023.

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Governor Announces Special Issuance of Summer P-EBT Payments

Earlier this month, Governor Lamont announced the issuance of special Summer P-EBT payments to eligible families. For more information refer to the [press release](#).

Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week: October 2-6, 2023

Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week is almost here! This is your chance to highlight the delicious and nutritious Connecticut Grown foods in your school meals. Go to [Put Local on Your Tray](#) for an array of tools, tips and marketing materials to celebrate and let your school community know about the great work you do. For questions, contact Monica Pacheco at monica.pacheco@ct.gov.

Resource Roundup: UConn Rudd Center's Implementing School Wellness Policies Video 3: Culturally inclusive wellness

Is cultural inclusivity a priority for your school or district? Would you like to bring a culturally inclusive approach to your school wellness activities? This [8-minute video](#), created by the UConn Rudd Center, explains the importance of culturally inclusive wellness practices, how schools can make their wellness activities culturally inclusive, the prevalence of districts in Connecticut that use culturally inclusive wellness practices, the challenges that schools face implementing these practices, and strategies to overcome these barriers.

Good to Know

New Resources for Food Safety Education Month: USDA Food Safety Fact Sheets

September is Food Safety Education Month. The USDA has [five new fact sheets](#) that provide food safety information and best practices, including specific information for produce. These resources are designed for USDA's partners and stakeholders, including Child Nutrition Program operators and agricultural producers. They contain useful information and provide an overview of the following topics related to food safety:

- [Food Safety Frequently Asked Questions](#)
 - [Food Safety Information and Resources for the Farm to School Community](#)
 - [Overview: Good Agricultural Practices](#)
 - [The Food Safety Modernization Act and the Produce Safety Rule](#)
 - [The Hazard Analysis Risk-Based Preventative Control Food Safety Plan and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Plan](#)
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Food Research & Action Center Webinar: Advocates: A Key Ingredient to School Meal Success, September 21, 2023

Anti-hunger advocates play a vital role in ensuring schools and school districts have the support and resources they need to operate robust school meals programs. From advancing supportive legislation to conducting research, anti-hunger advocates help ensure students have access to the healthy meals they need to learn and thrive. Join the Food Research & Action Center for a discussion on how anti-hunger organizations are collaborating with schools, school districts, and legislators to combat child hunger and support a nourished society.

- *Date and time:* Thursday, September 21, 2023, 3:00 p.m.
 - *Registration:* [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)
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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_09_20_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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EARLY COLLEGE
EXPERIENCE

2023-2024 PROGRAM FEE WAIVER POLICY

SITE REPRESENTATIVE GUIDANCE

BACKGROUND:

In an effort to streamline Student Fee Waiver determination and remove unintended barriers of access, the UConn Early College Experience (ECE) program will sunset the use of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Questionnaire as a determination of eligibility beginning Fall 2023. As such, UConn ECE has worked closely with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), to develop a simplified process which utilizes building/district student data already provided to the CSDE on an annual basis. Beginning with the 2023-24 academic year, UConn ECE will provide a fee waiver for all students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals or free milk in accordance with the Income Guidelines for the National School Lunch Program or deemed “categorically eligible” (e.g., SNAP, TANF, homeless etc.), as reported to the CSDE through the Direct Certification process and confirmed by each Partner School Site Representative during the course registration process.

Direct certification is a process utilized by all local educational agencies (LEAs) to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for household applications. Each week, the Direct Certification Web Application matches enrolled students to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Family Assistance (TFA), and certain income-specific Medicaid (coded as free Medicaid (FM) or reduced Medicaid (RM)) lists of children provided by the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS). On a monthly basis, the Direct Certification Web Application matches directly certified foster children (coded as Other or OT) with the Connecticut Department of Children and Family Services. The district’s direct certification contact person may access this information at any time.

UConn ECE is defined by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as a dual credit program and as such is considered a state education program and part of the state’s federal accountability system. This designation allows districts to share student eligibility data with authorized ECE Partner School Site Representatives to verify student fee waiver eligibility. **As a reminder, Site Representatives only verify Yes/No eligibility, not the ‘source’ for eligibility.** Site Representatives should work with District leadership to determine local verification procedures.

PROCESS:

- Each year, before UConn ECE Student Registration opens, Site Representatives whose high school qualifies for a whole-school fee waiver will be notified of their status by the UConn ECE office.
- Site Representatives whose high schools do not qualify for a whole-school fee waiver must work with district leadership to request access to student eligibility data, as reported to the CSDE, to confirm Yes/No student waiver eligibility for the given year in UConn.DualEnroll.com.
- Students who are identified as “yes” on the district’s reporting data are eligible for a UConn ECE program fee waiver. If a student is not on the list, they are not eligible for a UConn ECE fee waiver.

If a student has extenuating circumstances and/or hardships, please refer to the Hardship Request Policy below (also in the Policies & Procedures Guide) and/or reach out to ecbilling@uconn.edu directly.

WHOLE-SCHOOL WAIVER QUALIFICATIONS:

Partner schools may qualify for a 'whole-school fee waiver' if they meet either of the following eligibility criteria.

- The percentage of students eligible for free/reduced price meals at the school in the CSDE's most recent October 1 enrollment snapshot meets and/or exceeds 75%; or
- The school has been deemed eligible to receive 'schoolwide' Title 1 services, as reported by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

Each year, UConn ECE program staff will utilize the CSDE's Performance Office Annual Public School Information System (PSIS) data (October 1st snapshot data) and publicly released Title 1 designations to make determination on whole-school eligibility for the upcoming academic year. Additionally, UConn ECE program staff will use school-based percentage data to audit the percentage of students receiving course fee waivers as verified by Partner School Site Representatives.

PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENT WAIVER QUALIFICATIONS:

Students attending a private school (any non-public school) who receive a need-based reduction of tuition (a need-based scholarship) from their high school will receive a UConn ECE fee waiver for all courses. A UConn ECE fee waiver is only available in the same year a student receives their need-based high school reduction of tuition. Site Representatives are expected to notify these Students to indicate their qualification in the UConn.DualEnroll.com registration system, with instruction from the UConn ECE Program Office, and send supporting documentation to the UConn ECE Billing Department.

Additional information about program fees and fee waiver eligibility can be found on the Program Fees web page at ece.uconn.edu.

HARDSHIP REQUESTS

The Office of Early College Programs recognizes that in some instances, students may require financial assistance regardless of whether they meet the established criteria or eligibility for a Fee Waiver. This may include, but is not limited to, students who have experienced the loss of a parent/guardian, whose parent/guardian's employment or financial situation has drastically changed, or students who may be undocumented with limited access to banking/identification services. In these instances, UConn ECE program staff will review all hardship requests on a case-by-case basis. The official [Student Fee Waiver Appeal](#) must originate from the partner school site representative and additional information may be required.