

The School Lunch Tray: October 4, 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

- Food Safety Inspection Report for School Year (SY) 2022-23 Due October 31, 2023

Need to Know

- Happy Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week!
- No Table Talk on Thursday, October 5, 2023, Due to USDA Webinar on Final Rule, Community Eligibility Provision – Increasing Options for Schools
- USDA Memo SP 22-2023: Community Eligibility Provision: Implementing the New Minimum Identified Student Percentage
- USDA Webinar on Final Rule: Community Eligibility Provision – Increasing Options for Schools
- Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Reporting Tool and Office Hours
- Now Available: USDA's 2024 Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Participant Area Eligibility Data
- Updated CSDE Training Program: Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program, School Year 2023-24
- Difference Between Addendum A: Sharing Information with Other Programs and the Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Programs
- Updated CSDE Resource: Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs
- Two New USDA Training Modules for the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs
- Updated CSDE Resource: Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the What's in a Meal Training Modules
- Resource Roundup: Procedures for Processing Free and Reduced-price Applications with a SNAP or TFA Case Number

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Good to Know

- Get Ready for National School Lunch Week
- Team Nutrition Resources to Celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month
- Find School Meal Recipe Inspiration
- New MyPlate Instagram Account
- Team Nutrition Training Grants (TNTG) Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Highlights publication

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.



Action Items

Food Safety Inspection Report for School Year (SY) 2022-23 Due October 31, 2023

As required in section 9(h) of the National School Lunch Act (NSLA), 42 U.S.C. 1758(h), at least twice a year, schools must obtain a food safety inspection conducted by a state or local agency responsible for such inspections. As part of that requirement, the CSDE must annually collect the total number of inspections conducted at each school food authority (SFA) and report this number to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service by November 15, 2023. The food safety inspections requirement applies to all food preparation-service sites and service-only sites.

The Food Safety Inspection Report for SY 2022-23 must be completed in the [Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs \(CNP System\)](#). Guidance begins on page 29 of the [Updating the Sponsor Application for School Nutrition Programs](#) guide. The Food Safety Inspection Report can be completed by anyone who has access to the CNP System.

Food safety inspections for facilities not under the jurisdiction of the local or state health department

Some schools or facilities (such as schools or group homes operated by the Department of Children and Families) do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Health (DPH) and therefore, will not be inspected by DPH or the local health department. **However, food safety inspections conducted by the state agency that licenses the facility qualify toward meeting the requirement of two food safety inspections annually.**

While the CSDE recognizes that there may be difficulty in obtaining the two food safety inspections, SFAs are responsible for requesting such inspections and documenting such efforts. When two health inspections are not conducted, each sponsor is responsible for requesting the inspections and documenting these efforts (refer to the CSDE's [Sample Letter for Food Safety Health Inspection for the National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) and School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#)). Retain a copy of the letter/email sent to the health department to document attempts to comply with this regulation.

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Need to Know

Happy Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week!

Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week is October 2-6, 2023, and celebrations are happening across the state. Thank you for including healthy, nutritious Connecticut grown foods in your school meals! October is also National Farm to School Month, so there is still plenty of time to include Connecticut grown foods in school meals all month long. The University of Connecticut's [Put Local on Your Tray](#) website has tips, tools and marketing materials to make any day a Farm to School day.



No Table Talk on Thursday, October 5, 2023, Due to USDA Webinar on Final Rule, Community Eligibility Provision – Increasing Options for Schools

Table Talk will not be held tomorrow so that SFAs may attend the USDA Webinar on the final rule, Community Eligibility Provision – Increasing Options for Schools. For information on this webinar, refer to “USDA Webinar on Final Rule: Community Eligibility Provision – Increasing Options for Schools” below.

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USDA Memo SP 22-2023: Community Eligibility Provision: Implementing the New Minimum Identified Student Percentage

On September 26, 2023, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released SP 22-2023, *Community Eligibility Provision: Implementing the New Minimum Identified Student Percentage*. The purpose of this memo is to inform state agencies and local educational agencies (LEAs) about changes made to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in the Final Rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Community Eligibility Provision – Increasing Options for Schools*, published on September 26, 2023. This final rule amends CEP regulations by lowering the minimum identified student percentage (ISP) from 40 percent to 25 percent. Lowering the minimum ISP will give states and LEAs greater flexibility to offer no-cost meals to all enrolled students if financially viable. **Please note that this final rule does not change the 1.6 multiplier for establishing CEP claiming percentages.** This memo provides a general overview of the rule and clarification on when the new minimum ISP becomes effective.

Note: Since the final rule is effective after the June 30th CEP election deadline for SY 2023-24, the CSDE is required to request a waiver from FNS that will allow SFAs to take advantage of the new minimum ISP during SY 2023-24. The CSDE will issue an operational memorandum when additional information and guidance is received on implementing this final rule.

USDA Webinar on Final Rule: Community Eligibility Provision – Increasing Options for Schools

FNS is hosting a webinar for SFAs on the final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Community Eligibility Provision – Increasing Options for Schools*, on Thursday, October 5, 2023, at 2:00 p.m. Register at https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_Y1zYX1IfST6fFqMMBV4uQQ.

This webinar will be offered with closed captioning. Participants who require a different accessibility tool to participate in this webinar should contact SM.FNS.HRD.ReasonableAccommodation@usda.gov. For questions about webinar logistics or content, contact sm.fn.cndinternet@usda.gov.

Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Reporting Tool and Office Hours

Districts that would like to receive reimbursement (from their LFSIP funds allocation) for purchases of locally grown or produced foods must submit the [Monthly Local Foods for Schools Incentive Program \(LFSIP\) Reporting Form - Phase 1](#). Purchases made in August or September 2023 should be reported on the form by **Monday, October 16, 2023**. Districts will be reimbursed for any approved purchases through the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System).

Virtual Office Hours will start on October 10, 2023, from 2:00-3:00pm, and will be offered every other Tuesday at the same time. There is no formal presentation. This is a chance to get updates on the LFSIP, ask questions, and request technical assistance. Registration is not required. Please use the link below to join on Microsoft Teams.

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Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 267 894 309 102

Passcode: PoScS7

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 860-840-2075,,306075016#](#) United States, Hartford

Phone Conference ID: 306 075 016#

Now Available: USDA's 2024 Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Participant Area Eligibility Data

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) recently updated the 2024 CACFP and SFSP participant area eligibility data. At the start of every fiscal year, FNS releases a special tabulation of data provided by the Census Bureau that establishes area eligibility in the CACFP and SFSP. These data are effective as of October 1, 2023. The [FNS mapping tools](#) have also been updated to reflect the new data. The entire data set is available for download on the FNS [open data site](#). To learn more about using census data for establishing area eligibility for CACFP and SFSP, refer to [USDA Memo SP 08-2017, CACFP 04-2017, and SFSP 03-2017](#), Area Eligibility in Child Nutrition Programs, issued December 1, 2016.

As a reminder, links to this information and other resources for area eligibility are available on the CSDE's [Area Eligibility for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Updated CSDE Training Program: Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program, School Year 2023-24

The CSDE's [Determining Eligibility in the School Nutrition Programs and Summer Food Service Program](#) training program is updated to reflect updated documents for SY 2023-24. This training program includes a series of seven recorded modules that provide guidance on complying with the USDA regulations for determining a child's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals or free milk in the school nutrition programs and free meals in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The target audience is staff responsible for approving applications, conducting direct certification, and ensuring the accuracy of eligibility determinations through the verification process. This training program is required for determining officials and direct certification contacts. For new determining officials, these modules are a must and should be reviewed in their entirety.

School nutrition personnel may use the CSDE's Determining Eligibility training program to count toward the annual training hours required by the USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Program Professionals. For more information, refer to the CSDE's new resource, [Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the Determining Eligibility Training Modules](#). Completing all seven modules provides 4.75 training hours.

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Difference Between Addendum A: Sharing Information with Other Programs and the Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Programs

During recent reviews of multiple Meal Application and Data Management Process documents as part of approving each sponsor's online application, the CSDE has observed that some SFAs are incorrectly using these two forms:

- Addendum A: [Sharing Information with Other Programs](#); and
- the [Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

These two forms are different. The guidance below clarifies these differences and indicates when each form should be used.

[Addendum A](#) is an **optional** form that is used annually when a SFA, working with the determining official (DO), provides services (such as field trips, athletic uniforms, physicals, and holiday baskets) free of charge to students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Since the provision of these services does not fall under the USDA regulations for sharing the confidential free and reduced-price student information, DOs must receive a parent/guardian's written approval before sharing the child's free or reduced-price information. Addendum A is typically issued with the parent notification letter, informing parents/guardians of their child's eligibility determination for free or reduced-price meals.

The [Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Programs](#) is a **required** form that must be used **every time** someone requests access to a student's eligibility information. Completing this form ensures that individuals who will receive and use the information have a legitimate need to carry out an authorized activity. This form also outlines the penalty for misuse of a student's meal eligibility status. Some examples of requests are below.

- The Advanced Placement (AP) coordinator requests access to the list of free and reduced-price student data for 12th graders for the purpose of providing free SAT exams. Before giving access to student eligibility information, the DO must have the AP coordinator complete the disclosure release request form. Refer to the [School Lunch Tray dated September 13, 2023](#), for guidance about allowing AP coordinators access to a student's eligibility information.
- The athletic director provides the DO with a list of students on a team and wants to know those students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals to provide them with free uniforms. Before giving access to student eligibility information, the DO must have the athletic director complete the disclosure release request form **and obtain written parental permission** using Addendum A.

In summary, these two forms are different. Addendum A is an **optional** form completed by parents/guardians to give written permission to provide access for the services outlined on Addendum A that are specific to the SFA. The disclosure release request form is **required** for anyone asking the DO to provide access to a student's free or reduced-price eligibility information.

Updated CSDE Resource: Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs

An updated version of the CSDE's [Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs](#) (October 2023) is now available. This document summarizes the requirements for meal modifications for children without a disability who cannot drink milk. As a reminder, the USDA allows two types of milk substitutes for children whose dietary needs do not constitute a disability: 1) lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk that meets the appropriate fat content for each grade group of the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs; and 2) nondairy milk substitutes that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. All milk substitutes in public schools must also meet the state beverage requirements of Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Nondairy milk substitutes require a written request from the parent or guardian that identifies the medical or other special dietary need that restricts the child's diet. Lactose-reduced milk and lactose-free milk are fluid milk and credit as the milk component in school meals; they do not require a written statement from a parent or guardian.

Before purchasing any type of nondairy milk substitutes, SFAs should review products to make sure they comply with the USDA's requirements. [List 17](#) of the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage identifies commercial products that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes and the requirements of the state beverage statute. Certain brands of soy milk and oat milk are the only currently available nondairy milk products that meet these requirements. Almond milk, cashew milk, rice milk, some brands of soy milk, most brands of oat milk, and other nondairy milk products do not meet these requirements and cannot substitute for milk in the school nutrition programs. As a reminder, juice and water can never substitute as the milk component for children without a disability.

Two New USDA Training Modules for the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs

The USDA's Team Nutrition recently released two new training modules featuring the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG), Module 4: Exhibit A Grains Tool and Module 5: FBG Calculator. These modules provide a step-by-step tour through the Exhibit A Grains Tool and FBG Calculator available on the FBG Interactive Web-Based Tool and Mobile App. Each module provides an in-depth look at each tool and interactive knowledge checks to assist the learner.

Modules 4 and 5, along with the previous modules 1-3 and the USDA's webinar training recordings, are available on the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs: Training Resources](#) website.

- Module 1: Overview of the FBG for CNPs
- Module 2: Recipe Analysis Workbook (RAW)
- Module 3: Product Formulation Statement (PFS)
- Module 4: Exhibit A Grains Tool
- Module 5: FBG Calculator

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Links to these resources are also available from the “[Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs \(FBG\)](#)” section of the CSDE’s Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Updated CSDE Resource: Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the What’s in a Meal Training Modules

The CSDE’s What’s in a Meal training program is a series of recorded modules that provide comprehensive guidance on complying with the meal patterns for grades K-12 in the NSLP, SBP, and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. The CSDE’s resource, [Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the What’s in a Meal Training Modules](#), is updated to correct the total training hours. Completing all 16 modules of the CSDE’s What’s in a Meal training program provides **10.75 training hours** toward the annual training requirements of the USDA’s Professional Standards and meets the USDA’s Professional Standards training topics below for the key areas of 1000 Nutrition and 2000 Operations.

- 1100 MENU PLANNING: 1110 USDA Nutrition Requirements, 1120 Cycle Menus, 1140 Standardized Recipes, and 1160 Special Diets, including Food Allergies
- 2100 FOOD PRODUCTION: 2110 Standardized Recipes, 2120 Food Production Records, and 2150 CN Labeling and Crediting
- 2200 SERVING FOOD: 2220 Offer versus Serve and 2240 Serving Lines
- 2300 CASHIER AND POINT OF SERVICE: 2310 Reimbursable Meals

This training program is intended for school food service professionals in the NSLP, SBP, and SSO, including food service directors, managers, and staff.

Resource Roundup: Procedures for Processing Free and Reduced-price Applications with a SNAP or TFA Case Number

The CSDE’s [Procedures for Processing Free and Reduced-price Applications with a SNAP or TFA Case Number](#) has been updated to include language addressing how to review a DSS letter submitted by a parent/guardian to support a handwritten case number.

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Good to Know

Get Ready for National School Lunch Week

National School Lunch Week is October 9-13, 2023. Schools can level up their celebrations with these ideas.

- Display school lunch menu options with this fun [School Lunch Menu E-Poster](#).
- Host a fun [taste-test event](#).
- Join USDA's [Meal Talk webinar, Celebrate Lunch Trays Many Ways](#), on October 12, 2023.
- Share the [How School Lunch is Made and How You Can Help](#) article with middle schoolers
- Test Your Knowledge with the [School Lunch Web Quiz](#).

Check out Team Nutrition's School Lunch Materials in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) for more resources.

Team Nutrition Resources to Celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month

Team Nutrition has a variety of materials for Child Nutrition Programs, educators, and families/caregivers to use and share during National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15, 2023), and all year-long.

- Discover MyPlate: Nutrition Education for Kindergarten: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Multicultural Child Care Recipes inspired by Central and South America: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- MyPlate Resources: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Nibbles for Health: Nutrition Newsletters for Parents of Young Children: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Visit USDA's FNS Documents & Resources website for a full list of [Team Nutrition's Spanish-language resources](#). Sign up [here](#) to receive updates from Team Nutrition in Spanish!

Find School Meal Recipe Inspiration

More than 50 standardized recipes have been added to the Institute of Child Nutrition's [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#). These recipes were developed by state Child Nutrition agencies as part of their Fiscal Year 2021 Team Nutrition Training Grants. New recipes are available from Georgia, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. Each student-approved recipe highlights at least one of the state's local agricultural products.

New MyPlate Instagram Account

MyPlate recently announced the launch of [@MyPlate gov Instagram account](#). Each week will feature recipes, tips for healthy eating, and more with themes like #MyPlateMondays, #RecipeThursdays and #BudgetFriendlyFridays.

Team Nutrition Training Grants (TNTG) Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Highlights publication

In August 2017, FNS awarded more than 5 million dollars in TNTG funds to 11 state agencies that administered the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). State agencies used these grants to implement and evaluate nutrition education, meal service training, and environmental changes in school or child care settings. Eight state agencies conducted grant activities to assist students participating in the NSLP and the School Breakfast Program with meeting the recommendations of the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans by providing appealing and nutritious meals, nutrition education, and school environments conducive to healthy eating. Three state agencies conducted grant activities to improve the nutritional content of meals and snacks offered in child care centers and family day care homes participating in the CACFP. The USDA's [team Nutrition Training Grants Fiscal Year 2017 Highlights](#) showcases some of the wide array of grantee activities conducted.



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_10_04_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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