

# The School Lunch Tray: November 22, 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.

## Happy Thanksgiving!

### Action Items

- Reminder: Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Documentation for School Year 2023-24 Due November 30, 2023: *Applies only to HFC Public Schools*

### Need to Know

- Operational Memorandum No. 05-24: Schedule for Submitting Child Nutrition Programs Monthly Claims for Reimbursement in Fiscal Year 2024
- New CSDE Resource: Determining if Nondairy Beverages Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs
- Reminder: Optional Meal Modifications for Children without Disabilities
- Crediting Juice Blends in the School Meal Patterns for Grades K-12
- Data on Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Participation for SY 2023-24
- Resource Roundup: Completing the Verification Collection Report (FNS 742)

### Good to Know

- Updated USDA Team Nutrition Resources for Schools

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

# The School Lunch Tray: November 22, 2023

## Reminder: Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Documentation for School Year 2023-24 Due November 30, 2023: *Applies only to HFC Public Schools*

The submission deadline for the annual HFC documentation is **November 30, 2023**. The chart below summarizes the HFC documentation requirements. The HFC documentation forms and guidance for school year 2023-24, including a 21-minute recorded training module, are available in the [Documents/Forms](#) section of the CSDE’s HFC webpage. For questions, please contact [susan.fiore@ct.gov](mailto:susan.fiore@ct.gov).

Summary of HFC Documentation Requirements: Due November 30, 2023		
Public schools	Requirements	Guidance and forms (available in the <a href="#">Documents/Forms</a> section of the CSDE’s HFC webpage)
<b>All HFC districts</b>	1. <b>Submit online:</b> HFC Compliance Survey	<b>Review before beginning survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidance for Completing the HFC Compliance Survey</li> <li>Preview of the HFC Compliance Survey Questions</li> </ul>
<b>Certain districts:</b> Refer to the CSDE’s <a href="#">Districts Required to Submit Lists of Foods and Beverages</a>	1. <b>Submit online:</b> HFC Compliance Survey 2. <b>Email to CSDE:</b> Lists of foods and beverages (refer to page 8 of the CSDE’s Guidance for Submitting Lists of Foods and Beverages for HFC Documentation)	<b>Review before beginning survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidance for Completing the HFC Compliance Survey</li> <li>Preview of the HFC Compliance Survey Questions</li> <li>Guidance for Submitting Lists of Foods and Beverages for HFC Documentation</li> </ul> <b>HFC documentation forms to submit lists</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HFC Documentation Forms 1-7: “Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s HFC webpage</li> </ul>

## Need to Know

### **Operational Memorandum No. 05-24: Schedule for Submitting Child Nutrition Programs Monthly Claims for Reimbursement in Fiscal Year 2024**

[Operational Memorandum No. 05-24](#) outlines important information regarding the monthly claim submission process and claim due dates for fiscal year 2024 (October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024). Please review and share with all staff members involved with preparing and submitting claims, e.g., claim preparers and claim submitters. This memo is available on the CSDE's [Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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### **New CSDE Resource: Determining if Nondairy Beverages Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs**

The CSDE has a new resource, [Determining if Nondairy Beverages Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs](#). This document indicates how to determine if nondairy beverages like soy milk credit as a milk substitutes in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschoolers (ages 1-4). In addition to the direct link, this resource is available in the "[Milk Substitutes in School Nutrition Programs](#)" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

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### **Reminder: Optional Meal Modifications for Children without Disabilities**

School food authorities (SFAs) have the option to make meal modifications within or outside the school meal patterns on a case-by-case basis for children whose dietary needs do not constitute a disability. A medical statement is not required for optional modifications within the meal patterns. A medical statement is required for optional modifications outside the meal patterns.

The USDA does not require these optional meal modifications for children without disabilities, even if a medical statement is provided. Examples of optional modifications include requests related to religious or moral convictions, general health concerns, and personal food preferences, such as a family's preference that their children eat a gluten-free diet or organic foods because they believe it is healthier.

For detailed guidance on optional meal modifications for children without disabilities, refer to Section 3 of the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#).

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### Revised CSDE Guide and Resources on Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs (November 2023)

The CSDE released an updated version (November 2023) of the [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#), formerly called “Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs.” This guide has been updated to include additional guidance on optional meal modifications and optional milk substitutes for children without disabilities, new resources, and updated links. The resources below are updated to reflect these changes.

- **Milk substitutes:** [Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Procedural safeguards:** [Requirements for Procedural Safeguards for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Summary chart:** [Summary of Requirements for Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Developing Policies**
  - [Sample Action Plan: Developing District Policy for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#)
  - [Sample Action Plan: Promoting District Policy for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#)
  - [Self-assessment of Local Practices for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#)

Please discard any versions downloaded prior to today and replace them with the revised versions. All resources are available on the CSDE’s [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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### Crediting Juice Blends in the School Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

The crediting of juice blends that contain 100 percent fruit and vegetable juices depends on the information provided in the manufacturer’s product formulation statement (PFS). If the PFS indicates the amount of each type of juice in the blend, each type may be credited accordingly. For example, if the PFS indicates that the product contains  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup of fruit juice and  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup of sweet potato juice, the product credits as  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup of the fruit component and  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup of the red/orange vegetable subgroup. The minimum creditable amount of juice is  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup.

Without a PFS (or if the PFS does not provide the specific crediting information for each type of juice), juice blends credit based on the first juice ingredient. If the first juice ingredient is fruit juice, the product credits as the fruits component. If the first juice ingredient is vegetable juice, the product credits as the “additional” vegetables requirement and cannot contribute to the vegetable subgroups. For example, the juice blend contains a reconstituted vegetable juice blend as the first ingredient. This product credits as “additional” vegetables.

- **Ingredients: Reconstituted vegetable juice blend** (water and concentrated juices of sweet potatoes, purple carrots, carrots), reconstituted fruit juices (water and concentrated juices of

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apples, white grapes, cranberries, blackberries), contains less than 2% of: natural flavoring, citric acid, lemon juice.

For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program](#)

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### Data on Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Participation for SY 2023-24

Healthy Food Certification (HFC) is in its seventeenth year of implementation with SY 2023-24. The data below summarizes HFC participation for SY 2023-24.

- 189 school districts/schools (96.9% of eligible districts/schools)
- 3 new schools
- 100% recertification rate
- 90.8% increase from the first year (2006-07) to the current school year

The CSDE's handout, [Healthy Food Certification Participation for School Year 2023-24](#), includes a list of participating districts and schools, comparison charts of HFC participation from last year to this year, and a year-to-date summary. You can find additional information on the CSDE's [Healthy Food Certification](#) webpage, including a [color-coded map](#) of the towns implementing HFC, and a [HFC Data presentation](#) about current HFC participation data.

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### Resource Roundup: Completing the Verification Collection Report (FNS 742)

The CSDE's resource, [Completing the Verification Collection Report \(FNS 742\)](#), provides guidance to assist sponsors with completing the annual FNS 742 Verification Collection Report (VCR). All sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) must complete the VCR in the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System). Districts that are 100 percent Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) must also complete this document.

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## Good to Know

### Updated USDA Team Nutrition Resources for Schools

USDA's Team Nutrition recently made slight revisions to Team Nutrition publications below.

- [Offering Meats and Meat Alternates at School Breakfast](#)
- [Offering Smoothies as Part of Reimbursable School Meals](#)
- [Serving School Meals to Preschoolers](#)

The resources have been updated to remove guidance related to the COVID 19 Pandemic, update images, and reflect the current USDA logo and Team Nutrition URL.

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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\\_11\\_22\\_2023.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SLT/2023/SLT_11_22_2023.pdf).

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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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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