

The School Lunch Tray: March 13, 2024

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

- Public Schools: Schedule Board Meeting Now for the 2024-25 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement

Need to Know

- USDA Memo SFSP 07-2024 and SP 13-2024: Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas Questions and Answers
- Reminder: How the State Statute Requiring Nutritious and Low-fat Foods Applies to Vending Machines in Public Schools (Section 10-221p of the Connecticut General Statutes)
- New Resources: Requirements for Cafeteria A La Carte Foods and Beverages
- Resource Roundup: Crediting Foods Made from Scratch in School Nutrition Programs

Good to Know

- Ag Day at the Capitol: March 20, 2024
- Order Team Nutrition Materials in Print
- Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: A Deep Dive into the Community Eligibility Provision, March 14, 2024
- Free Training Webinars from the Institute of Child Nutrition

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

Public Schools: Schedule Board Meeting Now for the 2024-25 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement

To submit the final board of education (BOE) approved minutes to the CSDE by the deadline of July 1, 2024, districts need to plan several months ahead to 1) schedule the board meeting for the HFC votes; and 2) allow sufficient time to obtain the final BOE-approved minutes by the July 1 deadline. Make sure to account for the BOE's timeframe for approving final minutes. Many BOEs do not approve their minutes until the month after the initial meeting. For example, April's BOE minutes are typically approved in May. Remember that during the summer months, many BOEs suspend meetings or hold them infrequently. If the HFC votes do not occur until June, the district will not have final minutes to submit to the CSDE by the July 1 deadline.

For detailed guidance on the requirements for the annual HFC Statement, refer to the [Operational Memorandum No. 07-24: Requirements for Submitting the Healthy Food Certification \(HFC\) Statement for School Year 2024-25](#), and visit the "[Apply](#)" section of the CSDE's HFC webpage.

Need to Know

USDA Memo SFSP 07-2024 and SP 13-2024: Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas Questions and Answers

The USDA recently issued [USDA Memo SFSP 07-2024 and SP 13-2024: Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas Questions and Answers](#). The purpose of this memorandum is to update earlier guidance originally issued for Summer 2023 operations, and to ensure consistency with the provisions of the interim final rulemaking, [Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs](#) (88 FR 90230). Future Questions and Answers guidance will address additional implementation topics based on feedback received by State agencies and program stakeholders.

This memorandum and its attachment supersede USDA Memo SFSP 01-2023 and SP 05-2023, *Implementation Guidance: Summer 2023 Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas – Revised*, issued February 28, 2023, and USDA Memo SFSP 07-2023 and SP 14-2023, *Questions and Answers #2: Summer 2023 Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas*, issued April 20, 2023.

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Reminder: How the State Statute Requiring Nutritious and Low-fat Foods Applies to Vending Machines in Public Schools (Section 10-221p of the Connecticut General Statutes)

Section 10-221p of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) requires that whenever foods are available for sale to students **during the school day**, nutritious and low-fat foods must also be available for sale at the same time, either at the location of the food sales or elsewhere in the school. The statute defines “nutritious and low-fat foods” as low-fat dairy foods (such as low-fat cheese and low-fat or nonfat yogurt) and fresh or dried fruit. Low-fat milk is a beverage and cannot be used to meet the statutory requirement for low-fat foods.

Vending machines on school premises that sell foods to students during the school day must also sell low-fat dairy foods or fresh or dried fruit, unless these foods are available for sale to students elsewhere on school premises at the same time. For more information on C.G.S. Section 10-221p, refer to section 4 of the CSDE’s [Questions and Answers on Connecticut Statutes for School Foods and Beverages](#). For more information on the requirement or vending machines in public schools, refer to the resource below.

- **HFC public schools:** [Requirements for Vending Machines in HFC Public Schools](#)
- **Non-HFC public schools:** [Requirements for Vending Machines in Non-HFC Public Schools](#)

New Resources: Requirements for Cafeteria A La Carte Foods and Beverages

The CSDE has three new resources that summarize the federal and state laws for selling and giving foods and beverages to students from school cafeterias. These laws apply differently depending on the type of school. A separate resource is available for Connecticut public schools that choose to implement the healthy food option of Healthy Food Certification (HFC) under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.); non-HFC public schools, and private schools and residential child care institutions (RCCIs).

- **HFC public schools:** [Requirements for Cafeteria A La Carte Foods and Beverages in HFC Public Schools](#)
 - **Non-HFC public schools:** [Requirements for Cafeteria A La Carte Foods and Beverages in Non-HFC Public Schools](#)
 - **Private schools and RCCIs:** [Requirements for Cafeteria A La Carte Foods and Beverages in Private Schools and RCCIs](#)
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Resource Roundup: Crediting Foods Made from Scratch in School Nutrition Programs

To credit foods made from scratch toward the USDA meal patterns, school food authorities (SFAs) must maintain standardized recipes that document the crediting information per serving. For example, to credit macaroni and cheese as 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component and 2 ounce equivalents of the grains component, the SFA's standardized recipe must indicate that each serving contains 2 ounces of cheese and 1 cup of whole grain-rich or enriched pasta. For resources on how to credit foods made from scratch, visit the "[Crediting Foods Made from Scratch](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Good to Know

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: A Deep Dive into the Community Eligibility Provision, March 14, 2024

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) provides eligible schools the opportunity to nourish all students at no charge. Community eligibility reduces barriers to school meal participation and eases the administrative and operational burdens faced by school districts. In 2023, USDA released a new rule lowering CEP's participation threshold, thus allowing even more schools to participate.

Join the Food Research & Action Center and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for a deep dive into community eligibility, exploring CEP's benefits, regulations, and what the new threshold may mean for schools in your community.

- **Date and time:** Thursday, March 14, 2024, 3:00 p.m.
- **Registration:** [registration link](#)

Ag Day at the Capitol: March 20, 2024

The Connecticut Agricultural Information Council is hosting their annual Ag Day at the Capitol on March 20, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Representatives from Put Local on Your Tray, UConn Extension, Department of Agriculture, CT State Food Policy Council, SNACT and a multitude of farmers and their associations will be exhibiting and available to speak with you. This is a great event to kick-start farm to school planning for the upcoming growing season.

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Order Team Nutrition Materials in Print

State agencies, program operators, and sponsoring organizations that participate in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs can request free print copies of our materials, while supplies last.

For National Garden Month in April

- [Dig In! Poster Set](#)
- Grow It, Try It, Like It! for [Child Care Homes](#) | [Child Care Centers](#)

Other resources

- Discover MyPlate Emergent Readers: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- [Elementary School Posters](#)
- [Middle School Posters](#)

Free Training Webinars from the Institute of Child Nutrition

The Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) offers free trainings on a broad range of topics for child nutrition professionals working in school nutrition and child care settings.

Upcoming webinars

- March 28, 2024: School Nutrition Strategies, Trainings, Action Plans, and Resources Webinar – A Step-by-Step Approach to Effective Menu Planning
- April 4, 2024: Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition Webinar - Unlocking the Maximum Potential of Your Combi Oven

To receive webinar and registration information for upcoming webinars, [subscribe to the ICN newsletter](#). A link to register will be sent to subscribers one week before the webinar date.

View past webinars on the ICN's online learning management system, [iLearn](#).



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/2024/SLT_03_13_2024.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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