

The School Lunch Tray: August 21, 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

- Reminder: State Transition Assistance for Reduced-price (STAR) Funds Attestation Statement due August 23, 2024
- Annual Financial Report for School Nutrition Programs Due September 16, 2024
- Important Update: Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Participants

Need to Know

- Updated CSDE Civil Rights PowerPoint Presentation for School Year 2024-25
- Updated CSDE Resources for Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs for School Year 2024-25
- Updated Complying with Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Training Program for School Year 2024-25
- Updated List of Acceptable Food and Beverages Dated August 16, 2024
- Resource Roundup: CSDE's LFSIP Resources

Good to Know

- USDA Webinar: How to Bridge Language and Cultural Barriers with FNS Support, September 4, 2024
- USDA Meal Talk Webinar: Reducing Added Sugars in School Meals to meet the Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, Thursday, September 12, 2024
- Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) Shaking It Up: Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors
- Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) Culturally Inclusive Recipes Toolkit for School Nutrition Programs

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.

The School Lunch Tray: August 21, 2024



Action Items

Reminder: State Transition Assistance for Reduced-price (STAR) Funds Attestation Statement due August 23, 2024

[CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 16-24](#) provides information and guidance on the STAR Funds and the Attestation Statement for school year 2024-25 (due **August 23, 2024**). The Attestation Statement is due **August 23, 2024**. For school year 2024-25, as a result of [Section 242 of Public Act 24-81](#) the CSDE will cover the cost to families for one breakfast and one lunch per day for students who qualify for reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). This means that schools participating in the NSLP and/or SBP will not charge families for the reduced-price portion of these meals.

School Food Authorities (SFAs) eligible for STAR funds

- Public schools
- Charter schools
- Residential child care institutions (RCCIs) with day program students
- Endowed academies
- Schools under a full-service interschool agreement with an NSLP sponsor for SY 2024-25 (not including schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)).

SFAs not eligible for STAR funds

- Sites participating in the CEP for SY 2024-25
- Private school sponsors of the NSLP and/or SBP
- Schools participating in the Special Milk Program only
- Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs) without day students

All eligible NSLP and SBP sponsors must attest to the CSDE that they understand that under the STAR funds the CSDE shall be financially responsible for the non-federal portion of the cost for

The School Lunch Tray: August 21, 2024

reduced-priced meals under the NSLP and SBP that are provided to eligible students. Therefore, SFAs cannot charge families for the household share of reduced-price lunch or breakfast. An authorized signer must complete and submit the [STAR Funds Attestation](#) by August 23, 2024.

For additional information, refer to *Questions and Answers for Operational Memorandum No. 16-24, Addressing State Transition Assistance for Reduced-priced (STAR) funds for School Year 2024-25*, at the end of [CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 16-24](#).

Annual Financial Report for School Nutrition Programs Due September 16, 2024

To maintain the SFA's nonprofit status, the NSLP regulations require that the fund balance (net cash resources [NCR]) of the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA) cannot exceed three months' average expenditures at any time. SFAs must document compliance with the NCR requirement by submitting the annual Financial Report for School Nutrition Programs in the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System) by **September 16, 2024**. The CSDE's [Instructions for Submitting the Financial Report for School Nutrition Programs](#) provides step-by-step guidance on how to complete this report. For more resources to assist SFAs with completing the Financial Report, refer to "CSDE Resources for Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs for School Year 2024-25" below.

Important Update: Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Participants

As of July 2024, 60 of the 139 school food authorities (SFAs) who signed up to participate in the LFSIP have utilized some or all allocated funds. All SFAs that have not started spending these funds must verify their allocation amount on the [LFSIP Participating School Food Authorities School Year 23-24](#) document and start using these funds. [Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week 2024](#) (October 7-11, 2024) and [National Farm to School Month](#) (October) are the perfect time to offer students locally grown or produced foods. For questions or assistance, contact Monica Pacheco at monica.pacheco@ct.gov or Jen Bove at jen.bove@ct.gov.

The School Lunch Tray: August 21, 2024

Need to Know

Updated CSDE Civil Rights PowerPoint Presentation for School Year 2024-25

Updated versions (August 2024) of the CSDE's Civil Rights presentation and overview of the presentation (six slides per page) are available under the "[School Nutrition Programs](#)" section of the CSDE's [Civil Rights for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Please discard any previous versions. As a reminder, the USDA requires that all staff members who work with program applicants or participants must receive annual Civil Rights training. This includes front line staff, supervisors, determining officials, verifying officials, and hearing officials.

Updated CSDE Resources for Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs for School Year 2024-25

The CSDE recently updated the resources to assist SFAs with completing the Financial Report section of the Sponsor Application, which is due in the CNP System by **September 16, 2024** (refer to "Annual Financial Report Due September 16, 2024" above).

Updated Resources

- [Guide to Requirements for Financial Management of the School Nutrition Programs](#): This guide is the go-to resource to help SFAs understand the requirements for maintaining a nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA), determine allowable and unallowable expenses, and identify and allocate indirect costs.
- [Plan to Reduce Excess Operating Balance for School Nutrition Programs](#). School food authorities (SFAs) must submit this form to the CSDE when their nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA) exceeds three months' average expenditures, as reported in the Financial Report. Please only use the revised 2024-25 form (dated August 2024).

New Resources

- [Cost Allocation Plan Form for School Nutrition Programs](#). SFAs must complete a cost allocation plan for any expenditures or services that benefit other programs, such as cafeteria furniture, lunch aides, and utilities.
- [Instructions for Completing the Capital Expenditure Request Form for School Nutrition Programs](#): SFAs may purchase equipment listed on the CSDE's [Capital Expenditure Approved List for School Food Authority Equipment Purchases](#) without prior approval. However, SFAs must submit the Capital Expenditure Request Form for equipment with a unit cost of \$5,000 or greater that is not included on this list. This form is completed in the CNP System.

The School Lunch Tray: August 21, 2024

More Resources

- [Managing an Excess Operating Balance in the School Nutrition Programs](#): A one-page summary of the requirements and process for handling an excess operating balance for the school nutrition programs and determining allowable and unallowable costs.

For more information, visit the CSDE's [Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Updated Complying with Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Training Program for School Year 2024-25

An updated version of the CSDE's [Complying with Healthy Food Certification](#) training program is available for school year 2024-25. This training program consists of six recorded modules that provide guidance on how to meet the HFC requirements under Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes and the related state and federal laws for competitive foods in schools.

- Module 1: Introduction to Training and HFC
- Module 2: HFC Requirements
- Module 3: Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS)
- Module 4: Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance
- Module 5: Laws for Foods and Beverages in HFC Schools
- Module 6: Fundraisers

HFC contact person: The information in this training is required for the district's HFC contact person to ensure that all schools comply with the state and federal laws. The HFC contact person is the point person identified by the school district on the annual HFC Statement, who is responsible for coordinating HFC implementation and monitoring for the school district (refer to the CSDE's [Responsibilities of District Contact Person for Healthy Food Certification](#)).

Other staff: This training is also intended for individuals that coordinate sales of competitive foods to students on school premises, such as food service directors and managers, culinary programs staff, fundraising coordinators, vending machine operators, school store operators, and leaders of student organizations and parent groups that sell foods and beverages.

Professional standards for food service staff: School nutrition personnel may use this training program to count toward the annual training requirements of the USDA's professional standards requirements (refer to the CSDE's [Professional Standards Topics and Training Hours for the Complying with Healthy Food Certification Training Modules](#)).

The School Lunch Tray: August 21, 2024

Updated List of Acceptable Food and Beverages Dated August 16, 2024

Updated lists of foods that comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) and beverages that comply with the state beverage statute are now available on the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [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 [Summary of Updates to Approved Food and Beverages](#). **Note:** This summary includes only the changes since the last update; it is not a complete listing of all allowable products. For the complete list, visit the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage.

HFC schools must check that commercial foods and beverages are listed before they are sold to students. For additional guidance, refer to [How to Evaluate Commercial Food Products for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) and visit the "[How To Evaluate Foods for CNS Compliance](#)" section of the CSDE's CNS webpage.

Resource Roundup: CSDE's LFSIP Resources

The CSDE's [Local Food for Schools Incentive Program \(LFSIP\)](#) section of the CSDE's Current School Year Operational Updates for School Nutrition Programs webpage provides guidance, questions and answers, and other resources for the LFSIP. Additionally, the [Put Local on Your Tray](#) website offers many free marketing resources and includes a [Farmer's Directory](#) to find local farms that are interested in working with schools.

Good to Know

USDA Webinar: How to Bridge Language and Cultural Barriers with FNS Support, September 4, 2024

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Civil Rights Division (CRD), is presenting two sessions of a language access webinar on “How to Bridge Language and Cultural Barriers with FNS support.” These webinars are continuing the FNS journey towards bridging language and cultural barriers with their [Language Access Plan \(LAP\)](#).

Whether you are managing, administering, or supporting a federally assisted program, everyone has a role in engaging with all eligible individuals regardless of the language they speak. Overcoming language barriers is essential for effective communication and for ensuring equitable access and equal opportunity in program delivery.

Featured panelists include Ricardo Martinez, FNS Language Access Coordinator, and Marisol Wood, FNS Language Access Specialist, who will explore strategies for bridging language barriers using the FNS’ language access framework and discuss practical tips to help navigate common challenges in multilingual environments.

- Wednesday, September 4, 2024, 1:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.: [Registration link](#)
- Wednesday, September 11, 2024, 1:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.: [Registration link](#)

Closed Captioning and American Sign Language (ASL) will be available on the platform. For an alternative format or any accessibility tool to participate in this event, contact FNS.HRD.ReasonableAccommodations@usda.gov.

USDA Meal Talk Webinar: Reducing Added Sugars in School Meals to meet the Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, Thursday, September 12, 2024

On Thursday, September 12, the USDA's Team Nutrition Initiative will present a Meal Talk webinar on Reducing Added Sugars in School Meals to meet the Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Healthy Meals Incentives Breakfast Trailblazer Awardees from Thorton Fractional High School District in Lansing, Illinois, and Newman Crows Landing Unified School District in Newman, California, will share innovative ideas and best practices for reducing added sugars and engaging students in menu planning. Participants will also learn about USDA's Team Nutrition resources and the Healthy Meals Incentive Recognition Awards.

- **Date and time:** Thursday, September 12, 2024, from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
- **Registration:** [Registration link](#)
- **USDA Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs:** Key Area 1000: Nutrition and Training Topic 1100: Menu Planning
- **Learning Objectives:**
 1. Identify strategies to reduce added sugars in school meals that reflect local food preparation practices and taste preferences.
 2. Summarize best practices for incorporating menu items to reduce added sugars in school meals.
 3. Discuss how Team Nutrition resources can help improve the nutritional quality of school meals and meet added sugars limits.

Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) Shaking It Up: Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors

The ICN's [Shaking It Up: Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors](#) webpage provides tangible, practical guidance for school nutrition professionals to implement sodium reduction best practices and strategies in their school foodservice operations. This webpage provides a range of educational resources and training materials, including training worksheets and online courses.

Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) Culturally Inclusive Recipes Toolkit for School Nutrition Programs

The CICN's [Culturally Inclusive Recipes Toolkit for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage provides resources and information for school nutrition program operators and the school community to collaborate on the process of identifying, developing, testing, and incorporating culturally inclusive recipes in school meal programs.

The School Lunch Tray: August 21, 2024

For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's [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_08_21_2024.pdf.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems, gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; status as a victim of domestic violence; or criminal record in state employment, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; or by telephone 860-713-6594; or by email louis.todisco@ct.gov.

