

# The School Lunch Tray: September 4, 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: Sponsor Agreements Due September 16, 2024
- Reminder: Annual Financial Report for School Nutrition Programs Due September 16, 2024
- Reminder: Food Safety Inspection Report for SY 2023-24 must be completed in the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Online Application and Claiming System by September 30, 2024

## Need to Know

- Five Weeks Until Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week, October 7-11, 2024
- Using Free/Reduced Price Meal (FRPM) Eligibility for State Education Programs
- USDA Foods Updates for School Year 2024-25
- Recorded USDA Webinar Available on Buy American Provision: Child Nutrition Programs: Revisions to Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans – Buy American Provisions
- Resource Roundup: CSDE's Professional Standards Tracker Log for School Nutrition Programs

## Good to Know

- Revised USDA Crediting in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet series
- Team Nutrition's School Meals Grab n' Go newsletter: Reducing Added Sugars in School Breakfast

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

### Reminder: Sponsor Agreements Due September 16, 2024

To ensure timely approval, Sponsor Agreements renewals must be completed and submitted for approval by **September 16, 2024**. As a reminder, claims cannot be entered or submitted without an approved agreement. For instructions, refer to the CSDE's [Updating the School Year 2024-2025 Sponsor Agreement for School Nutrition Programs Manual](#).

For school food authorities (SFAs) eligible to receive State Transition Assistance for Reduced-price (STAR) funds, please pay close attention to the guidance on page 14 of the manual to select the correct pricing information for the participating sites. Also included in this manual are important instructions for completing the Food Safety Inspection Report and the annual Financial Report. Please review this information carefully.

Please review the [Checklist Summary](#) for a brief overview of materials that need to be uploaded to the Agreement before it can be reviewed and approved by the state agency. **Note:** There is one additional form that must be uploaded for sponsors that collect free and reduced-price meal applications: [Sample Parent/Guardian Notification Letter for Direct Certification Version 3: Medicaid Benefits Reduced-price Meals](#). This form must be uploaded under “SNP Upload.”

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

To maintain the school food authority's (SFAs) 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.

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## The School Lunch Tray: September 4, 2024

### **Reminder: Food Safety Inspection Report for SY 2023-24 must be completed in the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) Online Application and Claiming System by September 30, 2024**

As required in section 9(h) of the 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 SFA and report the number to the Food and Nutrition Services by November 15, 2024. The food safety inspections requirement applies to all food preparation-service sites and service-only sites.

The Food Safety Inspection Report for SY 2023-24 must be completed in the CNP System. Guidance begins on page 31 of the CSDE's [Updating the Sponsor Application for School Nutrition Programs](#). 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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# The School Lunch Tray: September 4, 2024

## Need to Know

### Five Weeks Until Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week, October 7-11, 2024

A great way to add to local options (or get started) is to offer Connecticut (CT) apples in the school nutrition programs. Whether for breakfast, lunch, afterschool snack or a Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program snack, local CT grown apples are abundant, delicious, and easy to find. Visit [Put Local on Your Tray](#) for apple crunch materials and have an Apple Crunch in your cafeteria. Their Farmer Directory helps find local orchards in your area.

The [Connecticut Apple Marketing Board](#) has all things apple related, such as lists of orchards, activities for kids, information about the many varieties of apples, and teacher's resources. Call or visit an orchard this week to be ready to crunch those apples in October!

For questions or assistance contact Monica Pacheco at [monica.pacheco@ct.gov](mailto:monica.pacheco@ct.gov) or Jen Bove at [jen.bove@ct.gov](mailto:jen.bove@ct.gov).

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### Using Free/Reduced Price Meal (FRPM) Eligibility for State Education Programs

On August 29, 2024, the CSDE sent the message below to all superintendents.

“The disclosure of FRPM eligibility is restricted. However, FRPM eligibility can be shared for the purposes of administration of a state education program. Dual credit courses that are offered in partnership with an institution of higher education, Advanced Placement (AP) exams, the PSAT and SAT tests, and the International Baccalaureate exams are all considered part of Connecticut's state education program. Therefore, coordinators for these projects (e.g. school counselors) may be granted access to students' FRPM eligibility status to ensure that students can receive fee waivers in these programs. Coordinators/counselors requesting access to FRPM eligibility data must complete the [Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Program](#) to ensure they have an understanding of the USDA regulations and do not use this information for other purposes. The completed form must be reviewed and approved by the district or school's determining official (i.e., the person who processes FRPM applications). Once approved, the determining official can provide the coordinator/counselor with the FRPM eligibility status for the applicable students.”

### USDA Foods Updates for School Year 2024-25

As the new school year begins, pricing for USDA Foods is significantly higher than last year. As a reminder, Requisition Status Reports should be run in Web Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) to determine which requests have been moved into “purchased” status. The Requisition Status Report will also indicate if trucks are canceled this year, so it is critical to continue running these reports until all USDA Foods are in either “purchased” or “canceled” status. For assistance with running reports, refer to the [WBSCM Training Guide](#).

For the first time in several years, there may not be additional funds for the USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program available this year, so please spend allocated funds carefully.

New food service directors who do not have access to WBSCM or the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Ordering and Receipting System (FFAVORS) should reach out to the [Food Distribution Team](#) for assistance with getting set up for a successful new year.

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### Recorded USDA Webinar Available on Buy American Provision: Child Nutrition Programs: Revisions to Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans – Buy American Provisions

A recorded version of the USDA webinar, [Child Nutrition Programs: Revisions to Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans – Buy American Provisions](#), is now available. This webinar reviewed the Buy American provision including information related to new regulations, the recently published [USDA Memo SP 23-2024](#), *Buy American Provisions Related to the Final Rule Titled, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, and the optional Buy American Exceptions tracker.

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### Resource Roundup: CSDE’s Professional Standards Tracker Log for School Nutrition Programs

The USDA requires SFAs to maintain documentation of professional development activities (such as trainings, workshops, and conferences) for all staff whose responsibilities include duties related to the operation of the school nutrition programs, including school food service personnel and non-school food service personnel. For example, teachers and other applicable personnel who conduct classroom meal counts or field trip meal counts must receive appropriate training to ensure they perform their jobs effectively and in compliance with the USDA’s regulations. SFAs may use the CSDE’s [Professional Standards Tracker Log for School Nutrition Programs Excel worksheet](#) to maintain these training records. For more information the professional standards, visit the CSDE’s [Professional Standards for School Nutrition Professionals](#) webpage.

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## Good to Know

### **Revised USDA Crediting in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet series**

The USDA has revised their [Crediting Tip Sheets in Child Nutrition Programs](#) to reflect the changes required by the final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). This series consists of seven tip sheets covering the five meal components: fruits, vegetables, meats/meat alternates, fluid milk, and grains (three separate tip sheets). The revised versions introduce the menu-planning flexibilities beginning July 1, 2024, and changes that will be implemented in the coming school years in a quick-reference format.

The Spanish series will be available online in September. Print copies of the Spanish and English tip sheets will be coming soon.

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### **Team Nutrition's School Meals Grab n' Go newsletter: Reducing Added Sugars in School Breakfast**

The current edition of [Team Nutrition's School Meals Grab n' Go newsletter](#) features quick tips to reduce added sugars in school breakfast menus. Limits on added sugars is one of the new nutrition standards outlined in the final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). A [Spanish version](#) is also available.

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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\\_09\\_04\\_2024.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/slt/2024/slt_09_04_2024.pdf).

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

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