

The School Lunch Tray: September 18, 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

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- Verification Must Be Completed by November 15, 2024

Need to Know

- Three Weeks Until Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week, October 7-11, 2024
- Updated Resources for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs
- New CSDE Resource: Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs
- New CSDE Resource: Sample Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs
- New CSDE Resource: Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs
- Reminder: Crediting Juice in Canned Fruit
- Updated CSDE Resource: County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs
- Updated USDA Resource: Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs
- Revised USDA Resource: Crediting in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet series
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) Report Highlights Junk Fees Charged by School Lunch Payment Platforms
- Resource Roundup: CT Farm to School Directory

Good to Know

- Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) School Nutrition Strategies, Trainings, Action Plans, and Resources (STAR) Webinar: Serving Safe Foods – From Receiving to Serving, September 26, 2024
- Open Café Day in Waterford, Connecticut on October 9, 2024
- SNACT Fall Conference, Show & 75th Anniversary Celebration: Picture the Possibilities, November 21-22, 2024
- USDA's New Nationwide Campaign: #WhatsOnMyPlate
- Team Nutrition's Spanish Language Resources
- Printed Team Nutrition Materials Available to Order
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Back-to-School Toolkit: Support Schools, Empower Students

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

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Equipment Assistance Grants Request for Proposals (RFP): Due October 4, 2024

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is now accepting proposals for the **USDA NSLP Equipment Assistance Grants Request for Proposals (RFP)**. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 117-328) provided funds to state agencies to competitively award equipment assistance grants to eligible school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). These funds will allow SFAs to purchase equipment to serve healthier meals that meet the updated meal patterns, improve food safety, and expand access. Total funds available are \$273,397. The CSDE will award grants of up to \$25,000 per SFA.

For this grant, the previous free or reduced-price meals percentage eligibility requirement has been eliminated. All SFAs participating in the NSLP are eligible to apply. Priority is given to schools that did not receive previous equipment grant funding under earlier USDA NSLP Equipment Assistance Grants.

The RFP document is attached to this e-mail and is also available on the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) 2024 [Request for Proposals](#) webpage.

Proposals must be received by 5:00 p.m. on **Friday, October 4, 2024**. Extensions will not be given. Submit the application **by email** to Sean Fogarty at Sean.Fogarty@ct.gov.

For questions about the USDA NSLP Equipment Assistance Grants, please contact Sean Fogarty at 860-807-2055 or sean.fogarty@ct.gov.

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Verification Must Be Completed by November 15, 2024

This is a reminder that the verification process begins October 1 and must be completed by November 15. The CSDE verification webinar, [Building Success: What You Need to Know About Verification](#), PowerPoint handout, and related handouts are available in the “[Related Resources](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Information regarding verification is available on the CSDE’s Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs webpage. The verification forms are available in the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section. Two important documents that assist in the verification process include the CSDE’s [Calendar for Completing Verification](#) and [Important Points for Completing Verification](#). Additionally, the [USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#), provides an overview of the verification process.

Need to Know

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

As we countdown to Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week, remember to visit [Put Local on Your Tray’s](#) website for an array of free marketing materials to promote products being served to your students. Click on the “Products” tab for a list of 15 different local produce/products with corresponding posters, stickers, fun facts, and other activities to help promote Farm to School efforts.

Updated Resources for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs

Updated versions (dated September 2024) of the CSDE’s resources for meal modifications below are now available. These updates reflect the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), new content and resources, updated links, and the CSDE’s new logo. The guidance in these documents applies to meal modifications for grades K-12 and preschool (ages 1-5) in all public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that participate in the USDA school nutrition programs.

- **CSDE guide:** [Guide to Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#): Provides comprehensive information and resources to assist local educational agencies (LEAs) and school food authorities (SFAs) with meeting the federal and state laws for meal modifications for children with special dietary needs, including meal modifications for disability and non-disability reasons.
- **Fluid milk substitutes:** [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs](#): Summarizes the requirements for meal modifications for children who do not consume regular cow’s milk due to non-disability reasons.

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- **Identifying allowable fluid milk substitutes:** [Identifying Products that Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the School Nutrition Programs](#): Indicates how to determine if nondairy beverages like soy milk meet the USDA's requirements for fluid milk substitutes.
- **Medical statement forms and instructions (English and Spanish):** Assist SFAs with collecting the required information to provide safe and appropriate meal modifications for students for disability or non-disability reasons. These documents are available in the "[Medical Statements for School Nutrition Programs](#)" section of the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- **Policy development:** A self-assessment tool, action planning form, and sample completed actions plans to assist LEAs with assessing current practices for meal modifications in the school nutrition programs, identifying areas in need of improvement, and implementing action plans to address change. These documents are available in the "[Resources for Assessment and Action Planning](#)" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.
- **Procedural safeguards:** [Requirements for Procedural Safeguards for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#): Summarizes the USDA requirements for LEAs to provide notice and information to parents/guardians regarding 1) how to request a reasonable meal modification for children whose disability restricts their diet; and 2) and their procedural rights for grievance procedures.
- **Summary chart:** [Summary Chart of the Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#): Summarizes the requirements for different types of disability and non-disability meal modification requests.

Please discard any versions downloaded prior to today and replace them with the current versions dated September 2024.

New CSDE Resource: Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs

The CSDE recently developed a new resource, [Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#). This eight-page document summarizes the meal modification requirements for grades K-12 and preschool (ages 1-5) in all public schools, private schools, and RCCIs that participate in the school nutrition programs.

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New CSDE Resource: Sample Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs

The CSDE's new resource, [Sample Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\) for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#), provides a modifiable template that LEAs can use to establish a standardized process for meal modifications for disability or non-disability reasons in the school nutrition programs. Developing and implementing SOPs help ensure that all students with dietary restrictions receive reasonable modifications in accordance with the USDA regulations and federal nondiscrimination laws. For detailed guidance on meal modification policies and SOPs, refer to section 4 of the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#) and visit the "[What's Next](#)" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

New CSDE Resource: Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs

All SFAs must comply with the USDA's records retention requirements for the school nutrition programs summarized below. These requirements apply to the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and [Food Distribution Program](#).

- Maintain all necessary records for a period of three years after submission of the final claim for reimbursement for the fiscal year.
- If audit findings have not been resolved, retain records beyond the three-year period, for as long as required to resolve the issues raised by the audit.

The CSDE's new resource, [Records Retention Requirements for the School Nutrition Programs](#), assists SFAs with meeting these requirements.

Reminder: Crediting Juice in Canned Fruit

As a reminder, juice and light syrup in canned fruit or fruit cups may count toward the fruits component and are not subject to the weekly juice limit for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 or the daily juice limit for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP preschool meal patterns. For example, ½ cup of canned peaches in juice or light syrup credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. For more information on crediting juice in the school meal patterns, refer to the CSDE's resources below.

- [Crediting Juice in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
 - [Crediting Juice in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs](#)
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Updated CSDE Resource: County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs

An updated version (dated September 2024) of the CSDE's [County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs](#) is available. This document indicates each county's assigned CSDE school nutrition team member available to provide technical assistance for the school nutrition programs. This is the person SFAs should contact regarding any questions about operating the school nutrition programs.

Updated USDA Resource: Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs

The USDA recently revised the [Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#) to reflect the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). This resource provides information on how to identify and offer foods that meet the NSLP and SBP whole grain-rich criteria and assist in implementing the meal pattern requirements for grains.

Revised USDA Resource: Crediting in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet series

The USDA's recently revised the [Crediting Tip Sheets in Child Nutrition Programs](#) to reflect the USDA 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 updated tips sheets are also available in Spanish on the USDA's [Consejos para la acreditación de alimentos en los Programas de Nutrición Infantil](#) website.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) Report Highlights Junk Fees Charged by School Lunch Payment Platforms

In July 2024, the CFPB released a report on payment processing companies that help school districts process children's school lunch payments, Report Highlights Junk Fees Charged by School Lunch Payment Platforms. For more information, refer to "[Report Highlights Junk Fees Charged by School Lunch Payment Platform](#)" and the CFPB's [Issue Spotlight: Costs of Electronic Payments in K-12 Schools](#).

Recent media articles have addressed this issue, such as "[US consumer watchdog finds that school lunch fees are taking a toll on parents](#)."

As a reminder, SFAs can use funds from the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA) to pay this fee on behalf of families. The USDA has confirmed that this is an allowable use of NSFSA funds

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Resource Roundup: CT Farm to School Directory

The [CT Farm to School Directory](#) on the [Put Local on Your Tray](#) website provides an extensive list of farms that can work with schools to provide fresh local produce and products. SFAs can see what is available in their area as they plan for Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week.

Good to Know

Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) School Nutrition Strategies, Trainings, Action Plans, and Resources (STAR) Webinar: Serving Safe Foods – From Receiving to Serving, September 26, 2024

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

Open Café Day in Waterford, Connecticut on October 9, 2024

Open Café Days provide school nutrition directors with the chance to visit and explore other school cafeterias across the state. These events facilitate the sharing of ideas, networking, and collaboration among participants. Host directors benefit from the opportunity to discuss and address any challenges they may be facing, while visiting directors gain insights and inspiration from different programs

Waterford Public School will be hosting an Open Café Day at Waterford High School on Wednesday, October 9, 2024, at 9:45 am. All are welcome to attend. Please RSVP to Dianne Houlihan at DHoulihan@waterfordschools.org by Wednesday, October 2, 2024.

Waterford High School
20 Rope Ferry Rd
Waterford, CT 06385

SNACT Fall Conference, Show & 75th Anniversary Celebration: Picture the Possibilities, November 21-22, 2024

Registration is now OPEN for Picture the Possibilities, SNACT's fall 2024 Conference at the Mystic Marriott on November 21-22, 2024. In addition to an amazing conference, SNACT will be celebrating their 75th year.

[Registration and Information](#)

On the agenda

- Unraveling the Mystery of AI: Your Nerdy Best Friend- Beth Z
 - How to maximize your Entitlement \$\$\$: Jose Quinones
 - Adapting to Workforce Change and Challenges: Lou Bronk
 - State Updates: CSDE
 - Empowering Safety: Insights on School Security: Jason Hiruo
 - Owning your program's narrative: Harnessing the power of social media: Dan Giusti
 - The best school nutrition trade show in CT
 - SNACT's 75 Anniversary Gala and Awards Ceremony
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USDA's New Nationwide Campaign: #WhatsOnMyPlate

USDA recently launched #WhatsOnMyPlate, a nationwide campaign to highlight how MyPlate fits many lifestyles and can be used to fit different food preferences, cultural tastes, and budgets. Through #WhatsOnMyPlate, people everywhere can learn about the healthy eating tools and budget-friendly resources available on USDA's [Digital Hub](#) and across MyPlate.gov. For information on social media, explore the [#WhatsOnMyPlate Social Media Toolkit](#) featuring sample social media messages, graphics, frames, animation videos, and tips for creating customized content.

Team Nutrition's Spanish Language Resources

The USDA's [Team Nutrition website is available in Spanish](#) and includes resources designed to increase access to Hispanic Americans who prefer communications in Spanish. Celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 - October 15, 2024) by sharing Spanish resources from Team Nutrition to support the Child Nutrition Programs.

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Printed Team Nutrition Materials Available to Order

Sponsors of the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs can request free print copies of Team Nutrition materials, while supplies last. For bulk orders, please email TeamNutrition@USDA.gov

Stickers



Each item includes 1 roll of 200 stickers.

- [I've Got Great Taste!](#)
- [Make Today a Try-Day!](#)
- [MyPlate Nate and Kate](#)
- [Official Taste Tester](#)
- [Stronger with School Meals](#) (each roll includes 5 different designs)

National School Lunch Week (October 14-18, 2024)

- [Be a Food Critic! Poster](#)
- Local School Wellness Policy Refresh! Infographic: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- MyPlate Guide to School Lunch for Families: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Offer versus Serve Posters: [Elementary](#) | [Middle](#) | [High School](#)
- [Stronger With School Meals Activity Booklet](#)
- [Taste-Test Poster](#)
- [Team Nutrition Popular Events Idea Booklet](#)

Farm to School Month (October)

- [Dig In! Poster Set](#)
- [Grow It, Try It, Like It! Fun with Fruits and Vegetables at Family Child Care](#)
- [Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit Featuring MyPlate](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Back-to-School Toolkit: Support Schools, Empower Students

The CDC's [Back-to-School Toolkit](#) includes digital resources for social media promotion on student health and well-being as they head back to school.

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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_18_2024.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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