

The School Lunch Tray: September 25, 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

- Final Reminder: USDA Foods Update on Web Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) and Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Order Receipt System (FFAVORS) Login Transition to Login.gov by September 30, 2024
- Final reminder: National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Equipment Assistance Grants Request for Proposals (RFP): Due October 4, 2024
- Reviewing the Local Educational Agency's Unpaid Meal Charge Policy and Procedures for the School Nutrition Programs: Deadline October 31, 2024

Need to Know

- Schedule for Upcoming CSDE Office Hours
- Two Weeks Until Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Week, October 7-11, 2024
- Reminder: CSDE's Application Certification, Direct Certification, and Verification Trainings
- Clarification Regarding Disclosure of a Child's Eligibility, the Addendum A and the Disclosure Release Form
- Resource Roundup: CSDE's Updated Meal Pattern Resource Lists (Preschool and Grades K-12)

Good to Know

- Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals: Deadline November 8, 2024
- USDA's Spanish MyPlate Resources: MiPlato

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: September 25, 2024

Action Items

Final Reminder: USDA Foods Update on Web Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) and Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Order Receipt System (FFAVORS) Login Transition to Login.gov by September 30, 2024

Registered WBSCM and FFAVORS users have received emails regarding the upcoming transition from the WBSCM and FFAVORS login to the Login.gov login. The eAuthentication (eAuth) Phase 1 transition to Login.gov went live as of September 12, 2023, which introduced the [new USDA eAuthentication Login page](#) and the new logon options using Login.gov credentials and multi-factor authentication (MFA) methods.

These changes are being implemented to prepare users to fully transition **by September 30, 2024**. At that time, Login.gov will be **required** to access USDA resources; users will not be able to access WBSCM or FFAVORS using their current eAuth credentials.

More information on this transition is available on the [eAuth website](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) webpage](#).

Final reminder: 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.

The School Lunch Tray: September 25, 2024

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

Reviewing the Local Educational Agency's Unpaid Meal Charge Policy and Procedures for the School Nutrition Programs: Deadline October 31, 2024

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) regulations for the National School Lunch program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) and Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10-215 (b) and (c) (Amended 2021) require local educational agencies (LEAs) to institute and clearly communicate a policy for unpaid meal charges in the school nutrition programs. LEAs should use CSDE's new resource, [Checklist for Reviewing the Local Educational Agency's Unpaid Meal Charge Policy and Procedures for the School Nutrition Programs](#), to determine if their unpaid meal charge policy and associated procedures comply with the federal and state requirements.

All LEAs must check their unpaid meal charge policy to ensure it meets the federal and state requirements. Policies that do meet these requirements must be updated to reflect all federal and state requirements.

The School Lunch Tray: September 25, 2024

Need to Know

Schedule for Upcoming CSDE Office Hours

The CSDE will be holding office hours this year to give SFAs the opportunity to ask questions about different areas of the school nutrition programs. The session on October 7, 2024, will focus on completing the Financial Report and the [Plan to Reduce Excess Operating Balance for School Nutrition Programs](#). The remaining dates focus on areas specific to the Administrative Review process, all sponsors who have questions or would like to learn more about the topic of the week are welcome to attend. Office Hours will be held most **Mondays from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.** Please see the schedule below:

Date	Topic of the week
September 30	Prep for next trainings, Resource Management risk assessment, Child Nutrition Programs Compliance module, Administrative Review Organizational Tool (AROT)
October 7	Filling out the Financial Report and the Plan to Reduce Excess Operating Balance
October 21	Certification and Benefit Issuance and Verification
October 28	Meal Counting and Claiming
November 4	Meal Components and Quantities, Offer versus Serve
November 18	On-site Monitoring, On-site Checklist
November 25	Civil Rights, Professional Standards, Local School Wellness Policy, Smart Snacks, School Breakfast Program, and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Outreach
December 2	Food Safety, Storage, Buy American
December 9	Preschool Meals, Meals in the Classroom
December 16	Afterschool Snack Program, Summer Meals Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

The Teams Meeting information is below. The same link will be used each week.

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 243 727 249 519

Passcode: vB3Kzq

Dial in by phone

[+1 860-840-2075,42858510#](#) United States, Hartford

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 428 585 10#

The School Lunch Tray: September 25, 2024

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

As a reminder, as of August 2024, 63 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 a great time to purchase local Connecticut grown food. Still unsure how to start? Reach out to Monica Pacheco at monica.pacheco@ct.gov or Jen Bove at jen.bove@ct.gov for assistance.

Reminder: CSDE's Application Certification, Direct Certification, and Verification Trainings

New (and veteran) determining officials are reminded that there are several webinars that address how to approve applications, conduct direct certification, and complete the verification process. These training programs are intended for staff responsible for approving applications for free and reduced-price meals or free milk, conducting direct certification, and ensuring the accuracy of eligibility determinations through the verification process. The verification webinar may be found on the "[Related Resources](#)" section CSDE's [Verification Procedures for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Additionally, CSDE reminds sponsors that the USDA [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#) is an important resource for determining and verifying officials and should be reviewed prior to contacting the SFA's school nutrition team member for assistance.

Clarification Regarding Disclosure of a Child's Eligibility, the Addendum A and the Disclosure Release Form

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

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 Programs](#) 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.

The School Lunch Tray: September 25, 2024

Please note that once the AP, PSAT, or SAT coordinator/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 Programs](#) 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.

Difference Between Addendum A: Sharing Information with Other Programs and the Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Programs
During recent reviews of multiple Meal Application and Data Management Process documents as part of approving each sponsor's online application, the CSDE has observed that some SFAs are incorrectly using the forms below.

- Addendum A: [Sharing Information with Other Programs](#)
- [Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Programs](#)

These two forms are different. The guidance below clarifies these differences and indicates when each form should be used.

[Addendum A](#) is an **optional** form that is used annually when an SFA, working with the determining official (DO), provides services (such as field trips, athletic uniforms, physicals, and holiday baskets) free of charge to students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Since the provision of these services does not fall under the USDA regulations for sharing the confidential free and reduced-price student information, DOs must receive a parent/guardian's written approval before sharing the child's free or reduced-price information. Addendum A is typically issued with the parent notification letter, informing parents/guardians of their child's eligibility determination for free or reduced-price meals.

The [Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Students in the School Nutrition Programs](#) is a **required** form that must be used **every time** someone requests access to a student's eligibility information. Completing this form ensures that individuals who will receive and use the information have a legitimate need to carry out an authorized activity. This form also outlines the penalty for misuse of a student's meal eligibility status. Some examples of requests are below.

- The Advanced Placement (AP) coordinator requests access to the list of free and reduced-price student data for 12th graders for the purpose of providing free SAT exams. Before giving access to student eligibility information, the DO must have the AP coordinator complete the disclosure release request form. Refer to [The School Lunch Tray: September 11, 2024](#), for guidance about allowing AP coordinators access to a student's eligibility information.

The School Lunch Tray: September 25, 2024

- The athletic director provides the DO with a list of students on a team and wants to know those students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals to provide them with free uniforms. Before giving access to student eligibility information, the DO must have the athletic director complete the disclosure release request form **and obtain written parental permission** using Addendum A.

In summary, these two forms are different. Addendum A is an **optional** form completed by parents/guardians to give written permission to provide access for the services outlined on Addendum A that are specific to the SFA. The disclosure release request form is **required** for anyone asking the DO to provide access to a student's free or reduced-price eligibility information.

Resource Roundup: CSDE's Updated Meal Pattern Resource Lists (Preschool and Grades K-12)

Updated versions of the CSDE's resource lists for the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs are available.

- [Resources for the School Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#)
- [Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns](#)

These documents include resources and websites to assist school food authorities (SFAs) with meeting the USDA's meal patterns and crediting requirements for the NSLP, SBP, SSO, and ASP. Resources are organized alphabetically by topic.

Good to Know

Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals: Deadline November 8, 2024

The Connecticut Milk Promotion Board and New England Dairy recently announced a funding opportunity from **Connecticut Dairy Farmers** to eligible schools in **Connecticut** to support food service needs related to expanding school meal programs or serving new dairy menu items. New schools can apply for a [turn-key customization station](#) in addition to other equipment packages. Visit New England Dairy's [School Grants](#) webpage for the application and more details. Funding for this program is provided by the Connecticut Milk Promotion Board and New England Dairy.

USDA's Spanish MyPlate Resources: MiPlato

National Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated from September 15th to October 15th and honors how Hispanic foods, culture, and traditions brighten and contribute to the overall culture and richness in America. Visit the USDA's [MiPlato en español](#) webpage for Spanish tip sheets, graphics, and more.

The School Lunch Tray: September 25, 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_09_25_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

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