

## The School Lunch Tray: December 23, 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**

- CSDE 2025-26 Annual Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Request for Proposals (RFP) Process Training for SFAs, January 30, 2025

### **Need to Know**

- Last School Lunch Tray for 2024
- Update on School Transition Assistance for Reduced-priced (STAR) Funds
- USDA Request for Information: Grain-Based Desserts and High-Protein Yogurt Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs
- Team Nutrition Resources to Help Implement the Final Rule
- USDA Child Nutrition Database Now Available on FoodData Central.

### **Good to Know**

- USDA's School Foodservice Supply Chain Challenges Dashboard
- Order Team Nutrition Materials in Print
- USDA Requests Public Comments on Pilot Projects for Tribes to Administer Child Nutrition Programs
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration final rule, Food Labeling: Nutrient Content Claims; Definition of Term "Healthy"

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.

**Happy Holidays!**



## Action Items

### **CSDE 2025-26 Annual Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Request for Proposals (RFP) Process Training for SFAs, January 30, 2025**

Sponsors who plan to outsource their food service program to a food management company or regional educational service center (RESA) for the first time, or those with contracts that will expire with the close of the current school year, must conduct a formal bid process to determine what services will be provided beginning July 1, 2025. All Request for Proposals (RFPs) must be reviewed and approved by the CSDE before publication. The subsequent contract must also be reviewed and approved by CSDE prior to execution.

The CSDE will conduct a mandatory training via Microsoft Teams for all school food authority (SFA) staff (e.g., business official, administrative staff, town/city or other procurement staff) involved in the FSMC RFP process. This training will address the timeline, process, and requirements for bidding for a new FSMC contract. This training is for SFA staff or consultants working with SFAs only. A separate FSMC staff training will be announced later.

- Date and time: Thursday January 30, 2025, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Registration: [registration link](#)
- Registration deadline: January 22, 2025

The template RFP and supporting documents will be available prior to the training and will be emailed to registered individuals. Questions prior to the training may be directed to Andrew Paul via email at [andrew.paul@ct.gov](mailto:andrew.paul@ct.gov) and a copy to Sean Fogarty at [sean.fogarty@ct.gov](mailto:sean.fogarty@ct.gov).

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## Need to Know

### **Last School Lunch Tray for 2024**

The School Lunch Tray will resume on January 8, 2025. Have a wonderful holiday season!

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### **Update on School Transition Assistance for Reduced-priced (STAR) funds**

Due to unforeseen administrative changes implemented by the U.S. Treasury, there have been delays in making STAR fund payments available to school food authorities (SFAs). As a result, the CSDE will require additional attestation criteria from all participating SFAs to release these payments. The new attestation requirements are currently under review by the authorizing agencies. The CSDE will notify SFAs as soon as further information and instructions are available. Please be assured that all STAR funds remain available and will be issued upon submission and approval of the required attestation forms. The CSDE appreciates your understanding and patience as we work through these adjustments.

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### **USDA Request for Information: Grain-Based Desserts and High-Protein Yogurt Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs**

On December 23, 2024, the USDA published the [Request for Information: Grain-Based Desserts and High-Protein Yogurt Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs](#) for public inspection. The request for information aims to obtain input to help inform future policymaking, guidance, and technical assistance related to grain-based desserts and high-protein yogurt crediting in Child Nutrition Programs (CNP). For more information, visit the USDA's FNS website, [Request for Information: Grain-Based Desserts and High-Protein Yogurt Crediting in Child Nutrition Programs](#). The USDA will share additional information about submitting public comments when the request for information publishes in the Federal Register and the comment period opens.

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### Team Nutrition Resources to Help Implement the Final Rule

Team Nutrition has more than 30 resources that can help Child Nutrition Program operators implement the final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). Visit Team Nutrition's [Resources for Schools](#) and [Resources for Child Care](#) webpages and look for the "star" symbol to find webinars, tip sheets, and training guides that have been updated to align with the Final Rule. Check back regularly to see more resources as they are updated.

For free trainings, visit the USDA's [Road to Successful Menu Planning Training Series](#) webpage. The USDA will continue to add new on-demand trainings and live webinar opportunities.

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### USDA Child Nutrition Database Now Available on FoodData Central.

The Child Nutrition Database (CNDB) has moved from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service website to the USDA's [FoodData Central](#) website. The CNDB is the required database for nutrient analysis software approved by USDA for use in school meals. The CNDB includes food product data collected for the following 19 nutrients and components: calories, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrate, dietary fiber, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin D, calcium, potassium, iron, ash, total sugars, added sugars, and moisture.

The CNDB includes nutrient data from: USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference (SR) Legacy Release, USDA Standardized Recipes, and food manufacturers for products produced for and marketed to school food service, including USDA Foods.

The branded product data in the CNDB will now be updated monthly on the same cycle as the Global Branded Food Products Database, with updates for the other data sources occurring twice annually, as needed.

SFAs should verify with their nutrient analysis software company that the software includes the most current version of the CNDB. Software users may contact their software company to inquire when the software will transition to monthly updates.

## Good to Know

### USDA's School Foodservice Supply Chain Challenges Dashboard

The USDA's [School Foodservice Supply Chain Challenges Dashboard](#) highlights key challenges school food authorities faced during school year 2023-24. It also visualizes how those challenges affected school meal operations, how schools adapted, and compares changes between the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years at the state level.

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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 Team Nutrition materials, while supplies last.

### New Arrivals

- Team Nutrition Resource Catalog for Schools: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Team Nutrition Resource Catalog for CACFP and SFSP: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- [School Lunch Dry-Erase Poster](#)

### Get Ready for National School Breakfast Week in March

- Offer versus Serve Breakfast Posters: [Elementary School](#) | [Middle/High School](#)
  - [Popular Events Idea Booklet](#)
  - [School Breakfast Photo Props](#)
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### USDA Requests Public Comments on Pilot Projects for Tribes to Administer Child Nutrition Programs

The public is invited to submit comments to <https://www.regulations.gov/> through March 24, 2025. The [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024](#), (P.L. 118-42) provided \$2 million for pilot projects that will allow Tribes to administer Child Nutrition Programs, assuming the roles and responsibilities typically held by state agencies. The Act authorized a maximum of 10 pilot projects, to operate for up to two years, in Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools, schools on or near Indian reservations, or in early child care and education facilities. Grantees may receive \$10,000-\$100,000 per school year.

Grantees may be:

- Indian Tribes;
- Tribal organizations approved by an Indian Tribe;
- Tribal educational agencies;
- A Consortium of Indian Tribes; or
- Partnerships between an Indian Tribe and either a state educational agency, local educational agency, Tribal educational agency; or the Bureau of Indian Education.

To obtain additional input from Program partners, FNS requests comments from the public to help inform the application process, and eligibility and selection criteria, for the Child Nutrition Tribal Pilot Projects. FNS invites feedback from Tribes; Tribal organizations, leaders, representatives, and associations; State agencies that administer the Child Nutrition Programs; and others interested in opportunities to promote Tribal sovereignty in the operation of the Child Nutrition Programs.

Comments may be submitted by either of the following methods:

- Online via the Federal eRulemaking Portal (preferred method): Go to <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/FNS-2024-0039> and follow the online instructions for [submitting comments](#).
- Mail: Send comments to School Meals Policy Division, Child Nutrition Programs, USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314.

For more information on submitting comments, refer to the Federal Register resource, [Tips for Submitting Effective Comments](#).

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## U.S. Food and Drug Administration final rule, Food Labeling: Nutrient Content Claims; Definition of Term "Healthy"

On December 19, 2024, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration today issued a final rule, [Food Labeling: Nutrient Content Claims: Definition of Term "Healthy."](#) to update the "healthy" nutrient content claim to help consumers identify foods that are particularly useful as the foundation of a diet that is consistent with dietary recommendations. Manufacturers can voluntarily use the claim on a food package if the product meets the updated criteria. To bear the "healthy" claim, a food product needs to:

- Contain a certain amount of food (food group equivalent) from at least one of the food groups or subgroups (such as fruits, vegetables, fat-free and low-fat dairy etc.) recommended by the Dietary Guidelines.
- Adhere to specified limits for the following nutrients: saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.

### Additional Information

- [Final Rule: Food Labeling: Nutrient Content Claims; Definition of Term "Healthy"](#)
- [Use of the Term Healthy on Food Labeling](#)
- [Consumer Update: A Fresh Take on What "Healthy" Means on Food Packages](#)
- [FDA's Nutrition Initiatives](#)
- [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025](#)
- [Press Release](#)

### Education Materials

- [Updated "Healthy" Claim - Factsheet](#)
  - [Updated "Healthy" Claim - Infographic](#)
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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\\_12\\_23\\_2024.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/slt/2024/slt_12_23_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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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