

The School Lunch Tray: January 8, 2025

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 School Food Authorities (SFAs), January 30, 2025
- Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Reporting Requirements: Report of December 2024 Purchases Due January 17, 2025

Need to Know

- CSDE 2025-26 Annual Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Request for Proposals (RFP) Process Training for SFAs, January 30, 2025
- Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Reporting Requirements: Report of December 2024 Purchases Due January 17, 2025
- Table Talk, Thursday, January 9, 2024: Focus on USDA Foods Available List for School Year 2025-26
- Introducing the CSDE's New Connecticut Regional Farm to School Coordinators and Required Webinar on January 13, 2025
- Important Update for USDA Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- Updates to CSDE's Webpages for Child Nutrition Programs
- Updated CSDE Webpage: Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs
- New CSDE Webpage: Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs
- Updates to What's in a Meal Training Modules for School Year 2024-25: Module 6 Meal Pattern Documentation Part A - School Menus
- Request for Proposal (RFP) for Chefs to Schools: Application Deadline February 5, 2025
- Resource Roundup: Using Cycle Menus in the School Nutrition Programs

Good to Know

- School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) peer Mentorship Program

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

CSDE 2025-26 Annual Food Service Management Company (FSMC) Request for Proposals (RFP) Process Training for School Food Authorities (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 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 and a copy to Sean Fogarty at sean.fogarty@ct.gov.

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Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Reporting Requirements: Report of December 2024 Purchases Due January 17, 2025

Districts that would like to receive reimbursement from their LFSIP funds allocation for purchases of locally grown or produced foods for the month of December 2024 must submit the [Monthly Local Foods for Schools Incentive Program \(LFSIP\) Reporting Form - Phase 1](#). Purchases made in December 2024 must be reported on the form by Friday, January 17, 2025. The following items are not allowable for reimbursement: fluid milk, baked goods including bread, rolls, or items that cannot be attributed to a specific farm or producer.

Need to Know

Table Talk, Thursday, January 9, 2024: Focus on USDA Foods Available List for School Year 2025-26

Join the CSDE's school nutrition programs staff on Thursday, January 9, 2024, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. for the first Table Talk of 2025. SFAs are invited to:

- assist in shaping the future direction of Table Talk; and
- participate in an open discussion with the Food Distribution Program (FDP) team regarding the USDA Foods Available List (FAL) for School Year 2025-26.

Please review the information provided in the FAL and New Product Review Sheets handout that was emailed separately to all SFAs earlier today and come prepared to discuss which new items may be a good fit for your district. The FDP highly values your feedback on current and future offerings.

Registration is not required. Please use the link below to join Table Talk on Microsoft Teams.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 225 336 668 44

Passcode: muTuBy

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 860-840-2075,,327687577#](#) United States, Hartford

Phone Conference ID: 327 687 577#

[Find a local number](#) | [Reset PIN](#)

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Introducing the CSDE's New Connecticut Regional Farm to School Coordinators and Required Webinar on January 13, 2025

The CSDE recently announced the launch of the new Regional Farm to School (F2S) Coordinators, who will be supporting NSLP sponsors across the state for the next two years. These coordinators are dedicated to helping schools increase the use of locally sourced foods and implement farm-to-school programming, enriching the school nutrition experience. An introduction to the F2S Coordinators and the regions they serve is attached.

The F2S Coordinators will assist sponsors in maximizing their [Local Food for Schools Incentive Program](#), work with schools to incorporate farm-to-tray strategies into their food service operations, navigate resources, connect with local farms, and provide customized support. Whether through technical assistance or collaborative initiatives, they are here to help SFAs strengthen their school meal programs with fresh, local ingredients.

The CSDE is conducting a **required** webinar on **January 13, 2025**, to introduce the F2S Coordinators for each region and provide information on how they can support SFAs.

- Date and time: Monday, January 13, 2025, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- Registration: [registration link](#)

Important Update for USDA Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Starting January 5, 2025, customers are now required to receipt orders within **2 business days** (previously 5 business days) after which a receipt is considered past due. Consistent with previous procedures for past-due receipts, ordering will be locked until the past-due receipts are processed. Receipts will continue to remain on the Edit Receipts screen for 7 days after delivery. USDA is implementing this procedure to align with [FNS Instruction 709-5: Shipment and Receipt of USDA Foods](#). For questions, email the FFAVORS help desk at sm.fn.ffavors@usda.gov.

Updates to CSDE's Webpages for Child Nutrition Programs

The Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs is in the process of updating all webpages for the Child Nutrition Programs in preparation for a future statewide web migration. The updates include adding specific topics to the lefthand navigation bar for easier access and updating content, links, and resources. The CSDE will also be updating documents and resources to reflect the updated links. For assistance with finding resources or to report broken links, please email susan.fiore@ct.gov.

Updated CSDE Webpage: Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs

The CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage has been updated to make it easier to find information. The five meal components (meats/meat alternates, grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk) are now located in the left navigation bar. The crediting documentation resources previously located on this webpage have been moved to the CSDE's new [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) (refer to "New CSDE Webpage: Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs" below).

New CSDE Webpage: Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs

The USDA requires that SFAs must maintain crediting documentation to demonstrate how menu items meet the requirements of the meal pattern regulations. The CSDE's new webpage, [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#), provides information on the required documentation for crediting commercial processed products and foods made from scratch. This webpage includes guidance and resources on Child Nutrition (CN) labels, product formulation statements, accepting product documentation, nutrition information, standardized recipes, and the USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs. This information helps SFAs meet the requirements of [USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025](#): Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements, as well as the NSLP and SBP regulatory requirements for maintaining standardized recipes for all foods made from scratch.

New CSDE Webpage: Water Availability for School Nutrition Programs

The CSDE's new [Water Availability for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage provides easy access to guidance and resources on the USDA's requirement for offering water in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP, as required by [7 CFR 210.10\(a\)\(1\)\(i\)](#) and [7 CFR 220.8\(a\)\(1\)](#) of the NSLP and SBP regulations.

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Updates to What's in a Meal Training Modules for School Year 2024-25: Module 6 Meal Pattern Documentation Part A – School Menus

The CSDE is in the process of updating [What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#) for school year 2024-25, to 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.

What's in a Meal Module 6: Meal Pattern Documentation, Part A – School Menus, is now available on the CSDE's [Meal Pattern Training for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

- This module reviews the documentation requirements for school menus for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool, including menus, production records, standardized recipes, the USDA's Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs, documentation for the Buy American Requirement, nutrition information for commercial processed foods, and key resources for guidance and training on documentation for school menus.
- The previous Module 6 Meal Pattern Documentation module is now two separate parts. The second part, Part B – Crediting Commercial Processed Products, is coming soon. This module will address the documentation requirements for crediting commercial processed products in the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool.
- Unlike the other What's in a Meal Modules (which apply only to the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12), module 6 (parts A and B) applies to the NSLP, SBP, and ASP meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool. The menu documentation requirements are the same for all grades and all school nutrition programs.

The updates are occurring in stages. The CSDE will notify SFAs as additional modules are released. All updated modules indicate "Updated for School Year 2024-25" in the description.

Request for Proposal (RFP) for Chefs to Schools: Application Deadline February 5, 2025

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is now accepting proposals for the [Chefs to Schools program \(RFP 849\)](#). This RFP awards grants to Alliance Districts, as defined in Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Section 10-262u, for the purpose of embedding professional chefs to assist with school meal programs. The CSDE will award up to five grants. Each grant recipient shall receive an annual grant of \$150,000 in each year of the pilot program (2025, 2026, and 2027), which must be spent by June 30 of each fiscal year.

Proposals must be received by 5:00 p.m. on February 5, 2025. Extensions will not be given. Submit applications by email to Sean Fogarty at sean.fogarty@ct.gov. For questions, please contact Sean Fogarty at sean.fogarty@ct.gov or 860-807-2055.

Resource Roundup: Using Cycle Menus in the School Nutrition Programs

The CSDE encourages SFAs to use cycle menus to plan reimbursable meals and afterschool snacks for the school nutrition programs. A cycle menu is a series of menus planned for a specific period with a different menu for each day. At the end of the cycle, the menu repeats in the same order. Guidance and resources on cycle menus are available in the "[Cycle Menus](#)" section of the CSDE's [Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Good to Know

School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) peer Mentorship Program

The [SNACT peer mentorship program](#) aims to support school nutrition professionals in improving their understanding of how to implement program guidelines. This initiative is designed to supplement the guidance provided by the CSDE for school nutrition programs and is available for new and experienced directors and district level managers. Register to request a mentor or become one by completing at the links below.

- [Request a Mentor](#)
- [Become a Mentor](#)

After completing the survey, a member of the Child Nutrition/Education Committee will reach out with next steps.

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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/2025/slt_01_08_2025.pdf.

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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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Connecticut Regional Farm to School Coordinators

AnaAlicia Cruz

South Central Region

AnaAlicia Cruz will be assisting districts with their Farm to School activities in the South Central region. In addition to her role as a Regional Farm to School Coordinator, AnaAlicia is the Founder and Executive Director of Nourish My Soul, a nonprofit that serves as a model for youth leadership and equitable food systems. AnaAlicia uses her education in both Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture to empower and excite young people to grow, prepare, and share healthy foods.



Becky Fahey

Southeast Region

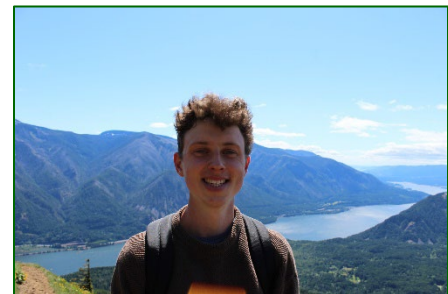
Becky Fahey will be assisting districts with their Farm to School activities in the Southeast region. Becky is a certified early childhood teacher with an MA in Education and 20 years of environmental and agricultural education experience. She has worked as a farmer, farm education coordinator, farm-to-table culinary instructor, and educational coach. Passionate about local food and food access, Becky is eager to support professionals in connecting children with sustainable food systems.



George Janssen

Southwest Region

George Janssen will be assisting with Farm to School in the Southwest region. Previously, he worked as an Agriculture and Nutrition educator in public schools throughout Philadelphia. George grew up in Vernon, attended the University of Connecticut, and was introduced to Connecticut's strong local agriculture network by working with Susan Mitchell at Cloverleigh Farm. His first experience with Farm to School was harvesting peppers at Cloverleigh that were sent to his childhood middle school for a tasting. George is excited to connect and help bring in some good food to the students and support local farmers.



Connecticut Regional Farm to School Coordinators

Kaylee Carlisle **Northeast Region**

Kaylee Carlisle will be assisting districts with their Farm to School activities in the Northeast region. Kaylee holds a Bachelor of Science in Applied and Resource Economics from the University of Connecticut and is currently completing her Master's in Sustainable Food Systems at Arizona State. She brings experience in agriculture, along with program coordination within food, nutrition and natural resource education outreach. Recently Kaylee worked as a district-based coordinator for Farm to School in Vernon, CT. Kaylee is passionate about promoting sustainable practices, social equity, and resiliency in food systems.



Raena Davis **North Central Region**

Raena Davis will be assisting districts with their Farm to School activities in the North Central region. Raena brings a background in biology and Spanish, and has completed studies in nutrition and dietetics. Raena served with FoodCorps AmeriCorps, where she connected students in East Hartford, CT with nourishing food in schools, and supported families' nutrition education journeys. Raena values the opportunity to experience different sides of local food systems to be a better advocate for the communities she serves.



Kimberly Hughes **Northwest Region**

Kim Hughes will be assisting districts with their Farm to School activities in the Northwest region. As an environmental educator for over 10 years, Kim works to ensure every child in her community has access to meaningful and inclusive outdoor learning experiences. Understanding our food and where it comes from has always been a great place to start as it reminds us of our deep connection to each other, the land, and the world around us. Kim appreciates the privilege of bringing Farm to School programs to every school and every student in Connecticut.

