

## The School Lunch Tray: April 2, 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

- Final Reminder: CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 05-2025, Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Annual Notification Requirement for all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) Participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) Due April 7, 2025
- CSDE Summer Meals Training on April 3, 2025: Seamless Summer Option Regulations
- 2025-26 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Grant Announcement: Applications Due April 30, 2025
- Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) Exemption Request for Unpaid Meal Charges Due April 30, 2025
- CNP System Now Open to Submit 2025-26 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement: Due July 1, 2025

### Need to Know

- Important Update: Deadline Extended for Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (Federal LFSIP)
- Save the Dates for CSDE Office Hours: Triennial Assessment using the WellSAT website
- Save the Date: Farm to School Conference, May 7, 2025
- Resource Roundup: Finding Previous Editions of School Lunch Tray

### Good to Know

- FoodCorps' 17 Children's Books We Love All About Food



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: April 2, 2025

### Action Items

**Final Reminder: CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 05-2025, Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Annual Notification Requirement for all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) Participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) Due April 7, 2025**

**All NSLP and SBP sponsors must submit** school-level CEP eligibility data to the CSDE no later than **April 7, 2025** (regardless of participation or intent to participate in the CEP). For information on how to access the CNP Application and Claiming System to enter notification data, refer to the CSDE's document, [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) Data Collection Guidance for School-level Eligibility Information](#). Information regarding the CEP application process for SY 2025-26 will be issued in a few weeks.

The steps for collecting data to update the annual Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) notification lists are outlined in [Operational Memorandum No. 05-2025, Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) Annual Notification Requirement for all Local Educational Agencies \(LEAs\) Participating in the National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) and/or the School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Due April 7, 2025](#).

Residential Child Care Institutions and Special Milk Program sponsors are exempt from this requirement.

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### CSDE Summer Meals Training on April 3, 2025: Seamless Summer Option Regulations

The CSDE is conducting an annual training session on Seamless Summer Option (SSO) Regulations for potential sponsors of the SSO. This training will be held on Thursday, April 3, 2025, from 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. All school districts considering operating SSO in summer 2025 should attend. Join the Teams trainings using the link below:

#### 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,,920756855#](#) United States, Hartford

Phone Conference ID: 920 756 855#

For questions about Summer Meal Programs training, please contact [caroline.cooke@ct.gov](mailto:caroline.cooke@ct.gov).

## The School Lunch Tray: April 2, 2025

### 2025-26 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Grant Announcement: Applications Due April 30, 2025

The CSDE's [FFVP Grant Announcement](#) provides information regarding the 2025-26 FFVP grant opportunity. The FFVP provides funding to serve a variety of free fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to all children in participating schools. **This grant-funded program is different from the USDA Foods DOD program.**

The CSDE will accept completed applications online until the close of business on **April 30, 2025**. For questions, please contact Jen Bove at [Jennifer.bove@ct.gov](mailto:Jennifer.bove@ct.gov) or 860-807-2044

On Friday, April 4, 2025, from 10:00-11:00 a.m., the CSDE will hold a one-hour information session on the FFVP application process, including time to answer questions regarding the process or program.

#### **Microsoft Teams** [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 234 759 551 92

Passcode: p5hW9ZX7

#### **Dial in by phone**

[+1 860-840-2075, 396576340#](#) United States, Hartford

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 396 576 340#

For organizers: [Meeting options](#) | [Reset dial-in PIN](#)

### **Submission Process**

Sponsors must compete and submit the 2025-26 FFVP Application via the Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs ([CNP System](#)). Sponsors must have an ID and Password to access the CNP System or must connect with district staff who have current access. The CSDE's [Instructions for Submitting the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program \(FFVP\) Grant Application](#) describes how to enter and submit the completed application.

**Applicants must also complete and upload the [Application Certification](#) form.**

Schools must be elementary schools, defined as schools inclusive of any grade between Kindergarten and grade 6, (e.g., Pre-K-6, K-12, and 5-8) where at least **50 percent** of the children are eligible for free and reduced-price meals to apply. The [FFVP Area Eligibility List](#) and [FFVP Site Eligibility List](#), are specific to the FFVP grant only, and assist applicants in determining which schools are potentially eligible to participate in the FFVP.

## The School Lunch Tray: April 2, 2025

For information on the FFVP, visit the CSDE's [FFVP](#) webpage. Applicants must review the USDA's [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Handbook](#) prior to completing the online application to ensure the application meets the federal guidelines.

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### **Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) Exemption Request for Unpaid Meal Charges Due April 30, 2025**

The CSDE issued [Operational Memorandum No. 12-24](#) on Tuesday June 11, 2024. This memo provides guidance for school year (SY) 2024-25 only allowing school food authorities (SFAs) that have an excess balance in the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA) to use those excess funds to eliminate the SFA's balance of unpaid school meal charges prior to June 30, 2025.

SFAs with a **positive or zero balance** in the NSFSA as of **June 30, 2023**, can request an exemption using the SY 2024-25 PLE exemption request. The SFA approved for a PLE exemption may propose to offset students' unpaid meal charges incurred in SY 2024-25 for reimbursable meals provided through the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program prior to June 30, 2025, when unpaid charges become debt.

The SFAs listed below have already been approved for the PLE exemption and plan to reduce unpaid meal charges. No additional action is required for these districts.

- Bethel School District
- Brookfield School District
- Clinton School District
- Enfield School District
- Fairfield School District
- Farmington School District
- Glastonbury School District
- New Fairfield School District
- Norwich Free Academy
- Plymouth School District
- Regional School District 01
- Regional School District 08
- Regional School District 15
- Southington School District
- Stratford School District
- Thomaston School District
- Waterford School District
- Watertown School District
- West Hartford School District
- Wolcott School District

## The School Lunch Tray: April 2, 2025

SFAs not listed above that are interested in participating in this opportunity must complete the information below **by April 30, 2025**.

1. Complete the [Request for a Paid Lunch Equity Exemption - SY 2024-25](#).
  2. Email Greg King at [greg.king@ct.gov](mailto:greg.king@ct.gov). The email must a) indicate that the district has completed the Request for a Paid Lunch Equity Exemption - SY 2024-25; and b) detail the changes that will be made to the district's Plan to Reduce excess Operating Balance to offset the cost of students' unpaid meal charges. Do **not** upload a new Plan to Reduce Excess Operating Balance to the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System).
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### CNP System Now Open to Submit 2025-26 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement: Due July 1, 2025

The HFC application module of the CSDE's [Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CNP System) is now open for submitting the 2025-26 HFC Statement. Please review the important information below.

- **Deadline:** All public school sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must submit the 2025-26 HFC Statement and upload their final board-approved minutes by **July 1, 2025**.
- **Only authorized signers 1 or 2 can submit the HFC Statement:** The HFC Statement must be completed, certified, and submitted by the district's authorized signer 1 or 2. These are the only two individuals who can submit the HFC Statement.
- **Enroll district in the 2025-26 application process before beginning HFC Statement:** The district must enroll in the 2025-26 application process for the school nutrition programs before the 2025-26 HFC Statement can be accessed. For guidance on how to enroll the district, refer to the CSDE's [Instructions for Enrolling in the Annual Application Process for the School Nutrition Programs](#). If the authorized signer cannot access the HFC Statement in the CNP System, this means the district has not yet enrolled.
- **Instructions for submitting the HFC Statement:** Authorized signer 1 or 2 completes the HFC Statement in the CSDE's Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System). Please read the CSDE's [Instructions for Submitting Connecticut's Healthy Food Certification Statement for School Year 2025-26](#) before entering the CNP System.
- **Complete the HFC module only:** Do not begin the application process to participate in the school nutrition programs for school year 2025-26. The CSDE will notify sponsors when it is time to start the online application process for school nutrition programs.
- **Guidance on HFC application requirements:** The HFC application requirements are summarized in the "[Annual HFC Application](#)" section of the HFC webpage and CSDE [Operational Memorandum No. 03-25](#). For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's 21-minute training module, [Completing the Application Process for Healthy Food Certification](#).
- **Questions:** Contact Susan Fiore at [susan.fiore@ct.gov](mailto:susan.fiore@ct.gov).

## The School Lunch Tray: April 2, 2025

### Need to Know

#### **Important Update: Deadline Extended for Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (Federal LFSIP)**

The CSDE has received approval from the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to extend the period of performance for the [Federal LFSIP to May 29, 2026](#). The CSDE is requiring that SFAs spend their allocation by **January 1, 2026**. Any unspent allocations will be reallocated to other participants by February 1, 2026.

Although this extension has been granted by the USDA, this is subject to change at any time; therefore, SFAs should continue to prioritize spending the federal LFSIP allocations to purchase local, minimally processed, and unprocessed foods for their school nutrition programs.

The CSDE is committed to ensuring that Connecticut students and communities receive the full benefits of the Federal allocation by maximizing the local impact of these resources.

[Connecticut's Regional Farm to School Coordinators](#) will continue to provide technical assistance and support to assist SFAs in locating and properly procuring locally produced unprocessed or minimally processed agricultural products for their school meal programs, including support with Forward Contracting.

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#### **Save the Date: Connecticut Farm to School Conference, May 7, 2025**

Join the CSDE and UConn Extension's Put Local on Your Tray for a Farm to School Conference, May 7, 2025. Increase farm to school programming in your cafeteria and learn about best practices in local procurement and network with farmers and food hub operator. This event will count toward professional standards requirements.

- **Location:** Auer Farm, 158 Auer Farm Road, Bloomfield, CT from 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- **Cost:** \$20 (lunch is included)

More information will be coming soon.

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## The School Lunch Tray: April 2, 2025

### Save the Dates for CSDE Office Hours: Triennial Assessment using the WellSAT website

The CSDE is offering a series of office hours on conducting the school wellness policy Triennial Assessment using the WellSAT website. Save the dates below and bring your questions. Links to join the office hours will be sent in advance of each session.

- Monday, April 28, 2025, from 2:00-3:00 p.m.
- Monday, May 12, 2025, from 2:00-3:00 p.m.

As a reminder, the USDA's final rule, [Local School Wellness Policy \(LSWP\) Implementation Under the HHSFKA of 2010](#), requires that each local educational agency (LEA) must complete an assessment of their LSWP at least once every three years. The second triennial assessment is due June 30, 2025, and is conducted using WellSAT.

Visit the "[Triennial Assessments](#)" section of the CSDE's School Wellness Policies webpage for many resources to assist Connecticut sponsors with navigating the Local School Wellness Policy and Triennial Assessment requirements. For questions, please contact Fionnuala Brown at [fionnuala.brown@ct.gov](mailto:fionnuala.brown@ct.gov).

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### Resource Roundup: Finding Previous Editions of School Lunch Tray

As a reminder, previous editions of the School Lunch Tray (SLT) are available on the CSDE's [School Lunch Tray and Table Talk](#) webpage. The summary of each year's topics and date includes links to access each School Lunch Tray. The 2025 topics are located in the [Summary of SLT Topics for 2025](#).

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### Good to Know

#### **FoodCorps' 17 Children's Books We Love All About Food**

FoodCorps members have compiled a list of "[17 Children's Books We Love All About Food](#)." These books support lessons in classrooms, cafeterias, and gardens.

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## The School Lunch Tray: April 2, 2025

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\\_04\\_02\\_2025.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/slt/2025/slt_04_02_2025.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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