

The School Lunch Tray: April 23, 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

- Next CSDE Office Hour for Triennial Assessment Using the WellSAT Website: Monday, April 28, 2025
- Save the Date for CSDE Training Session: Overview of the Final Rule Meal Pattern Changes for the School Nutrition Programs, May 1, 2025
- Save the Date for CSDE Information Session: Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (S-EBT) Program: May 5, 2025
- Reminder: Attend the Connecticut Farm to School Conference on May 7, 2025
- Reminder: 2025-26 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement: Due July 1, 2025

Need to Know

- Resource Roundup: Start with Half a Cup Portion Guides for Fruits and Vegetables

Good to Know

- Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) STAR Webinar: Strategies for Navigating Bids and Vendor Selections in School Nutrition, April 24, 2025
- Free Workshop: Teaching in Your School Garden, April 29, 2025
- Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) Webinar: Reducing Sodium with Scratch Cooking in School Meals, May 1, 2025
- ICN Recorded Webinar: STAR: Strategies for Incorporating Plant-Based, Minimally Processed Standardized Recipes for All Students



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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

Next CSDE Office Hour for Triennial Assessment Using the WellSAT Website: Monday, April 28, 2025

The next CSDE office hour on conducting the school wellness policy Triennial Assessment using the WellSAT website will be held on Monday, April 28, 2025, from 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 218 248 029 265 7

Passcode: WR9Mo3ca

Dial in by phone

[+1 860-840-2075,,295325641#](#) United States, Hartford

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 295 325 641#

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

As a reminder, the USDA's final rule, [Local School Wellness Policy \(LSWP\) Implementation Under the HFFKA 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 Fionnula Brown at fionnuala.brown@ct.gov.

Save the Date for CSDE Training Session: Overview of the Final Rule Meal Pattern Changes for the School Nutrition Programs, May 1, 2025

The USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), required changes to the meal patterns for the school nutrition programs (grades K-12 and preschool) beginning July 1, 2024. Additional changes are effective with school year 2025-26, beginning July 1, 2025. This session will discuss the current and upcoming meal pattern changes for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) meal patterns for grades K-12, and the NSLP, SBP, and Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) preschool meal patterns. Resources to assist SFAs with implementation will also be identified.

- **Date and time:** Thursday, May 1, 2025, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Registration is not required. Use the Teams link below to attend.

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#

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

[Learn More](#) | [Meeting options](#)

Save the Date for CSDE Information Session: Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (S-EBT) Program: May 5, 2025

The CSDE will be conducting an information session about the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (S-EBT) program on Monday, May 5, 2025, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. The S-EBT information session will provide general information, share resources, and walk through exciting new developments that may impact students' eligibility for free or reduced-priced school meals. Come to the information session ready to share your ideas about what S-EBT resources will be most useful to you and your students.

- **Date and time:** Monday, May 5, 2025, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

Registration is not required. Use the Teams link provided below:

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 292 234 008 557 0

Passcode: Hs9Bn7Zc

Dial in by phone

[+1 860-840-2075,,968777524#](#) United States, Hartford

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 968 777 524#

Reminder: Attend the Connecticut Farm to School Conference on 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 operators. This event will count toward professional standards requirements.

- **Location:** Auer Farm, 158 Auer Farm Road, Bloomfield, CT from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
 - **Cost:** \$20 (lunch is included)
 - **Registration:** [registration link](#)
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Reminder: 2025-26 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement: Due July 1, 2025

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**, in the CSDE's [Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CNP System). Please review the important information below.

- **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.
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Need to Know

Resource Roundup: Start with Half a Cup Portion Guides for Fruits and Vegetables

As a reminder, one piece of whole fresh fruit may or may not credit as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. The crediting amount for one piece of fresh fruit depends on the type and size. For example, one clementine credits as $\frac{3}{8}$ cup of fruit and one 138-count orange credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit. School food service staff can use the [Start with Half a Cup portion guides](#) to quickly determine the correct portioning of fruits and vegetables.

Good to Know

Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) STAR Webinar: Strategies for Navigating Bids and Vendor Selections in School Nutrition, April 24, 2025

This webinar will equip school nutrition professionals with effective strategies for navigating the bid process and vendor selections. Join ICN to gain insights on securing high-quality food at competitive prices and to learn practical tips for successful procurement. The session will also cover best practices for creating clear bid specifications--ensuring compliance with procurement regulations--and assessing vendors, with a focus on maintaining effective communication, sustainability, and sourcing local fresh foods.

- **Date and time:** Thursday, April 24, 2025, 3:00 p.m.
 - **Registration:** [Registration Link](#)
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Free Workshop: Teaching in Your School Garden, April 29, 2025

Common Ground High School, Urban Farm and Environmental Education Center in New Haven, CT are offering a free workshop, rain or shine, to connect your school garden or outdoor classroom to curriculum. This workshop targets teachers at the elementary school grade level, but anyone is welcome to attend, including food service directors. Please share with curriculum and teaching staff, farm to school coordinators, and others.

- **Date and time:** Tuesday, April 29, 2025, 3:30-4:40 p.m.
 - **Registration:** [Register for Teaching in Your School Garden](#)
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Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition (CICN) Webinar: Reducing Sodium with Scratch Cooking in School Meals, May 1, 2025

Reducing sodium in school meals does not mean compromising on flavor. In this webinar, child nutrition operators will identify practical techniques for replacing high-sodium ingredients with fresh, flavorful alternatives. Join to hear how Power School District 30 in Montana successfully incorporated natural flavor enhancers into their recipes through easy substitutions and additions. They will also share their step-by-step approach that can be integrated into existing menus. The ICN will also highlight existing resources that support child nutrition operators in incorporating sodium reduction best practices in their daily operations in school kitchens.

- **Date and time:** Thursday, May 1, 2025, 3:00 p.m.
- **Registration:** [Registration Link](#)

ICN Recorded Webinar: STAR: Strategies for Incorporating Plant-Based, Minimally Processed Standardized Recipes for All Students

There is a growing focus on offering plant-based, minimally processed meal options that meet the meal pattern requirements for all students in school meal programs. The ICN's webinar, [STAR: Strategies for Incorporating Plant-Based, Minimally Processed Standardized Recipes for All Students](#), presented in collaboration with Friends of the Earth, highlights practical strategies for school nutrition professionals to incorporate plant-based, minimally processed standardized recipes that showcase a variety of flavors while aligning with USDA meal pattern requirements.

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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_04_23_2025.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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