

## The School Lunch Tray: May 21, 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

- Reminder: 2025-26 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement: Due July 1, 2025
- Reminder to Receipt USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Orders in FFAVORS within Two Days

### Need to Know

- New CSDE Resource: Guide to Required Policy for Unpaid Meal Charges in the School Nutrition Programs
- Recording Available for CSDE Webinar on May 15, 2025: Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern Updates for School Year 2025-26 and ASP Operational Requirements
- Resource Roundup: Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN)'s Nutrition Standards for Added Sugars Fact Sheets

### Good to Know

- None



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: May 21, 2025

## Action Items

---

### 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](mailto:susan.fiore@ct.gov).
-

---

### **Reminder to Receipt USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Orders in FFAVORS within Two Days**

As the school year begins to wind down, Recipient Agencies (RAs) must ensure that all final USDA Foods DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable orders are being receipted in FFAVORS within 2 business days of delivery. Without receipting, the vendor cannot be paid for their services.

---

## Need to Know

---

### **New CSDE Resource: Guide to Required Policy for Unpaid Meal Charges in the School Nutrition Programs**

The CSDE's new resource, [Guide to Required Policy for Unpaid Meal Charges in the School Nutrition Programs](#), addresses the federal and state requirements for local educational agencies (LEAs) that participate in the USDA's National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to institute and clearly communicate a policy for unpaid meal charges. The federal requirements apply to all public, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that serve children participating at the reduced price or paid rate. The state requirements apply to all public schools, regardless of whether they participate in the NSLP and SBP. The contents of this guide are based on the USDA regulations and [Connecticut General Statutes \(C.G.S.\) Section 10-215 \(b\) and \(c\)](#).

---

### **Recording Available for CSDE Webinar on May 15, 2025: Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern Updates for School Year 2025-26 and ASP Operational Requirements**

The recording of the CSDE's May 15, 2025, webinar, Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern Updates for School Year 2025-26 and ASP Operational Requirements, is available in the "[Quick Links](#)" section and "[ASP Meal Pattern for Grades K-12](#)" of the CSDE's ASP webpage.

Effective with school year 2025-26 (beginning July 1, 2025), the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), makes significant changes to the current ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 by aligning it with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) snack meal pattern for children. The first part of this session reviews the ASP meal pattern requirements for grades K-12, including the new final rule requirements, crediting guidance, and resources to assist SFAs with implementation. The second part of this session discusses the USDA's operational requirements for the ASP.

---

---

### Resource Roundup: Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN)'s Nutrition Standards for Added Sugars Fact Sheets

The ICN [Nutrition Standards for Added Sugars Fact Sheets](#) is a series of fact sheets on reducing added sugars in school meals to assist school food authorities (SFAs) with meeting the limits for added sugars required by the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). These fact sheets detail the reasoning behind these limits, highlight the health advantages for students, and offer guidance on implementing the product-based limits for breakfast cereals, yogurt, and flavored milk. SFAs can use these fact sheets to understand the guidelines and make informed decisions to help reduce added sugars in school meals.

---

## The School Lunch Tray: May 21, 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\\_05\\_21\\_2025.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/slt/2025/slt_05_21_2025.pdf).

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

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)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems, gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; status as a victim of domestic violence; or criminal record in state employment, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; or by telephone 860-713-6594; or by email [louis.todisco@ct.gov](mailto:louis.todisco@ct.gov).

