

The School Lunch Tray: August 13, 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

- Triennial Assessment (Due June 30, 2025) and Reporting Form Due September 15, 2025
- School Year (SY) 2025-26 Free and Reduced-Price Application Materials

Need to Know

- New Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (S-EBT) Codes in Direct Certification
- Updated CSDE Civil Rights PowerPoint Presentation for School Year 2025-26
- Updated List of Acceptable Food and Beverages Dated August 13, 2025

Good to Know

- Resource Roundup: Fruits and Veggie Toolkit from Have a Plant®
- Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals Deadline September 19, 2025
- Rooted Together: A Fall Gathering for Farm-Based Educators, September 19-21, 2025



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.

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Action Items

Triennial Assessment (Due June 30, 2025) and Reporting Form Due September 15, 2025

As a reminder, all sponsors were federally required to complete the triennial assessment of their Local School Wellness Policy (LSWP) by June 30, 2025, and to make the results publicly available. This includes posting the assessment summary on the organization's website or sharing it through other public channels.

In addition, the CSDE requires all sponsors to complete the [Triennial Assessment Reporting Form](#) by September 15, 2025. This reporting form allows the CSDE to track sponsor compliance with federal requirements related to the triennial assessment and public disclosure of LSWP implementation.

For guidance and resources related to the triennial assessment and local wellness policies, visit the "[Triennial Assessments](#)" section of the CSDE's School Wellness Policies webpage. For questions, email fionnuala.brown@ct.gov.

The CSDE thanks sponsors for their continued efforts to support student health and wellness in Connecticut schools.

Need to Know

New Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (S-EBT) Codes in Direct Certification

The Direct Certification list has been renamed the "Direct Certification & S-EBT" list (refer to the CSDE notification on August 7, 2025). The Direct Certification & S-EBT list contains the new S-EBT codes; students with "FE" are eligible for free school meals and students with "RE" are eligible for reduced-price school meals. As a reminder, these new codes are **not** direct certification. Students receiving the FE or RE designation submitted and had a S-EBT application approved that confers eligibility for school year (SY) 2025-26 free or reduced-priced school meals. The S-EBT applications are processed by the CSDE.

The FE and RE designations are being transmitted to SFAs via the Direct Certification & S-EBT list; however, these designations should be treated by the SFA as an NSLP application that has already been processed and approved. Additionally, the CSDE is conducting the required NSLP verification procedures for the student applications designated as FE and RE; therefore, FE and RE students should not be included in the SFA's verification pool for SY 2025-26.

Treat students designated with FE or RE as if the district has already received and approved a meal application for them. While the CSDE expects only a small number of FE and RE students this year, this is the first year of implementation, and some adjustments may be needed. Each district should decide how to manage these codes—either by working with software vendors to automate the process or by entering them manually.

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Questions may be directed to the S-EBT coordinator, Dave Donovan at David.donovan@ct.gov.

Updated CSDE Civil Rights PowerPoint Presentation for School Year 2025-26

Updated versions (July 2025) of the CSDE's [Civil Rights presentation](#) and [overview of the presentation](#) (six slides per page) are available under the "[School Nutrition Programs](#)" section of the CSDE's Civil Rights for Child Nutrition Programs webpage. Please discard any previous versions.

As a reminder, the USDA requires that all staff members who work with program applicants or participants must receive annual Civil Rights training. This includes front line staff, teachers and staff involved with classroom meals, supervisors, determining officials, verifying officials, and hearing officials.

Updated List of Acceptable Food and Beverages Dated August 13, 2025

Updated lists of foods that comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS) and beverages that comply with the state beverage statute are now available on the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage.

- **New products** on the lists are indicated by pink highlighting on the manufacturer and product name.
- Items that have been **added or deleted** since the last update are listed on the CSDE's [Summary of Updates to Approved Food and Beverages](#). **Note:** This summary includes only the changes since the last update; it is not a complete listing of all allowable products. For the complete list, visit the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage.

Healthy Food Certification (HFC) schools must check that commercial foods and beverages are listed before they are sold to students. For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [How to Evaluate Commercial Food Products for Compliance with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#), and visit the "[Evaluating Foods for CNS Compliance](#)" section of the CSDE's CNS webpage.

Note: Effective July 1, 2025, the [Connecticut Nutrition Standards for school year 2025-26](#) require new limits for added sugars for breakfast cereals, yogurt, pudding, and smoothies made with low-fat yogurt and fruits/vegetables/100 percent juice, based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). In addition, the USDA final rule requires limits for added sugars in flavored milk effective July 1, 2025.

Products that exceed the added sugars limits have been removed. Note that this information may change, as manufacturers submit reformulated their products. Future updates to the List of Acceptable Food and Beverages will reflect any changes submitted to the CSDE.

Good to Know

Resource Roundup: Fruits and Veggie Toolkit from Have a Plant®

The Foundation for Fresh Produce developed the [National Fruits & Veggies Month Toolkit](#) in honor of National Fruits & Veggies Month in September. The toolkit's theme, Every Time You Eat, Have A Plant®, highlights different ways to make it easy to enjoy more fruits and veggies every day.

Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals Deadline September 19, 2025

The Connecticut Milk Promotion Board and New England Dairy recently announced a funding opportunity from Connecticut Dairy Farmers to eligible schools in Connecticut to support food service needs related to school meal programs or serving new dairy menu items. Visit New England Dairy's [School Grants](#) webpage for the application and more details. Funding for this program is provided by the Connecticut Milk Promotion Board. The application deadline is September 19, 2025.

Rooted Together: A Fall Gathering for Farm-Based Educators, September 19-21, 2025

- **Dates:** September 19-21, 2025
- **Location:** Massaro Community Farm, Woodbridge, CT
- **Agenda and registration:** [Rooted Together: A Fall Gathering for Farm-Based Educators - Woodbridge, CT](#)

Gather with fellow farm-based educators at this unique professional learning event, designed and delivered by Farm-Based Education Network program alumni. Participants will experience a tour at Massaro Community Farm (with many school field trip elements), inquire into the importance of rewilding with the EcoType project, visit Common Ground Urban Farm in New Haven, take part in favorite farm-based education activities with experienced educators, and enjoy an unforgettable tidal foraging expedition and meal of undervalued, "invasive" plants with Miya's Sushi. Get ready to learn, reflect, and restore in a supportive peer learning environment.

Hosted by Massaro Community Farm, Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture and Environment, early childhood educator, Jamilla Jones, and the [Farm-Based Education Network](#).

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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_08_13_2025.pdf.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
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