

The School Lunch Tray: October 1, 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: Food Safety Inspection Report for School Year 2024-25 Due October 31, 2025
- Reminder: Register for SNACT's 2025 Fall Conference at Foxwoods: October 28-29, 2025

Need to Know

- September Claims for Reimbursement and CSDE Approval of Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) Online Agreements
- Updated CSDE Resource: Addendum C: Information on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Fiscal Year 2026 CACFP and SFSP Area Eligibility Data Now Available
- Federal LFSIP Sponsor Remaining Balances & Platform Update for SY 2025 26 
- Milk Made from Reconstituted Milk Powder Cannot be Sold as Part of Reimbursable Meals and Snacks or A La Carte in Connecticut Child Nutrition Programs
- Resource Roundup: Recipe Ideas for Schools

Good to Know

- Educational Opportunities for Students and Staff from the Yellow Farmhouse Education Center: Please Share with Teachers and Administrators 
- Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals: Deadline November 17, 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

Reminder: Food Safety Inspection Report for School Year 2024-25 Due October 31, 2025

The Food Safety Inspection Report for school year (SY) 2024-25 must be completed in the [Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CNP System) by October 31, 2025

As required in section 9(h) of the NSLA, 42 U.S.C. 1758(h), at least twice each year, schools must obtain a food safety inspection conducted by a state or local agency responsible for such inspections. As part of that requirement, the CSDE must annually collect the total number of inspections conducted at each school food authority (SFA) and report the number to the Food and Nutrition Services by November 15, 2025. The food safety inspections requirement applies to all food preparation-service sites and service-only sites.

The Food Safety Inspection Report for SY 2024-25 must be completed in the CNP System at the same time the sponsor completes and submits the annual sponsor application, but no later than October 31, 2025. Guidance begins on page 31 of the Updating the Sponsor Application for School Nutrition Programs guide. The Food Safety Inspection Report can be completed by anyone who has access to the CNP System.

Food safety inspections for facilities not under the jurisdiction of the local or state health department: Some schools or facilities (such as schools or group homes operated by the Department of Children and Families) do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Health (DPH) and therefore, will not be inspected by DPH or the local health department. **However, food safety inspections conducted by the state agency that licenses the facility qualify toward meeting the requirement of two food safety inspections annually.**

While the CSDE recognizes that there may be difficulty in obtaining the two food safety inspections, SFAs are responsible for requesting such inspections and documenting such efforts. When two health inspections are not conducted, each sponsor is responsible for requesting the inspections and documenting these efforts (refer to the CSDE's [Sample Letter for Food Safety Health Inspection for the National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) and School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#)).

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Reminder: Register for SNACT's 2025 Fall Conference at Foxwoods: October 28-29, 2025

Registration is open for **Solving the School Nutrition Puzzle: Every Piece Counts**, the SNACT's 2025 Fall Conference at Foxwoods on October 28-29, 2025. For more information, refer to the links below.

- Registration link: <https://snact.org/page/Annualconf>
- Agenda: [Full agenda](#)
- Questions: execdir@snact.org

Need to Know

September Claims for Reimbursement and CSDE Approval of Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) Online Agreements

The CSDE reminds local educational agencies (LEAs) that their CNP Online Agreement must be approved before the September claim may be submitted. CNP Online Agreements are being approved in the order they are submitted. Issues with the LEA's CNP Online Agreement will delay the approval process.

If the LEA's CNP Online Agreement has not been approved, please review the agreement to ensure that 1) the checklist items have been correctly uploaded and completed in full, especially the Meal Application and Data Management Process Meal Application and Data Process form, and the Site Information on Money Collection System and Point of Service Meal Counting System document; 2) the policy statement is signed by an authorized representative, and 3) the Direct Certification for Reduced-price Medicaid Letter Version 3 is uploaded. Make sure to carefully review each site application to ensure that the pricing information is accurate, especially the reduced price for breakfast and lunch.

For information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Updating the Sponsor Application for School Nutrition Programs School Year 2025-26](#) and the [Required Items for the Online Sponsor Application "Checklist Summary" in the Connecticut State Department of Education's \(CSDE\) Agreement for Child Nutrition Programs](#) for more information.

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Updated CSDE Resource: Addendum C: Information on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The CSDE recently updated Addendum C: Information on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), to reflect the new guidelines issued by the Connecticut Department of Social Services as of October 1, 2025. The revised version is dated October 2025 and is available in English and Spanish under ["Addenda"](#) in the "Application Forms" section of the CSDE's Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Fiscal Year 2026 CACFP and SFSP Area Eligibility Data Now Available

The USDA recently announced that the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) [Area Eligibility Mapper for CACFP and Summer Meals](#) is updated for fiscal year (FY) 2026. At the beginning of each fiscal year, the USDA release a special tabulation of American Community Survey (ACS) data provided by the United States Census Bureau, which can be used to establish area eligibility in both CACFP and SFSP. To make the data easier to use, the data release is accompanied by an interactive mapping tool, which now reflects the FY 2026 update.

The data set is also available for download on the USDA's open data site, [Participants Eligible for Free and Reduced Price FY 26](#). To learn more about using census data for establishing area eligibility for CACFP and SFSP, review [USDA Memo SP 08, CACFP 04, SFSP 03-2017: Area Eligibility in Child Nutrition Programs](#).

Federal LFSIP Sponsor Remaining Balances & Platform Update for SY 2025-26



The current remaining balances for school food authorities under the Federal Local Food for Schools Incentive Program (LFSIP) Phases 1 & 2 are now available. Refer to the CSDE's resource, [Local Food for Schools Incentive Program Phase 1 and Phase 2: Remaining Balance for School Food Authorities](#).

The CSDE is also transitioning to a new platform for submitting Federal LFSIP reimbursement requests. The process is still being finalized, but the new platform and instructions should be available soon. **In the meantime, please retain all receipts.**

For additional LFSIP details, including further sponsor funding information, visit the "[Local Food for Schools Incentive Program](#)" section of CSDE's CT Fresh Ed (Farm to School) website.

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Milk Made from Reconstituted Milk Powder Cannot be Sold as Part of Reimbursable Meals and Snacks or A La Carte in Connecticut Child Nutrition Programs

Milk made from reconstituted milk powder does not meet the USDA's definition of fluid milk or the Connecticut beverage requirements for fluid milk (Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes) and cannot be sold as part of reimbursable meals and snacks or a la carte in Connecticut Child Nutrition Programs. The chart below shows an example of unallowable and allowable low-fat milk for Connecticut Child Nutrition Programs.

Examples	Allowed in Reimbursable Meals/Snacks or A La Carte
Milk made from reconstituted milk powder Lowfat milk (water, nonfat milk powder, whole milk powder), sugar, natural flavors, cellulose gel, cellulose gum, potassium carbonate, vitamin A Palmitate, vitamin D3.	No. This product cannot be served in reimbursable meals/snacks or sold a la carte because it does not meet the federal definition for fluid milk or the Connecticut beverage requirements for fluid milk. Note: Some products made from reconstituted milk powder might meet the USDA's Smart Snacks nutrition standards for beverages. However, products made from reconstituted milk powder cannot be sold a la carte in Connecticut schools because the state beverage statute is stricter and only allows fluid milk.
Low-fat milk Lowfat milk, sugar, cocoa (processed with alkali), carrageenan, salt, vitamin A palmitate, vitamin D3.	Yes. This product may be served in reimbursable meals/snacks and sold a la carte. Note: Flavored low-fat milk must meet the USDA limit for added sugars. Flavored milk in reimbursable meals/snacks and sold a la carte cannot exceed 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces. Flavored milk sold a la carte in middle and high schools cannot exceed 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces

As a reminder, specific brands of fluid milk that meet all federal and state requirements are on List 16 of the CSDE's [List of Acceptable Foods and Beverages](#) webpage. SFAs must check that unlisted products comply with all federal and state requirements before selling them to students. For more information on the requirements for fluid milk, visit the "[Milk](#)" section of the CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

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Resource Roundup: Recipe Ideas for Schools

The “[Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs](#)” section of the CSDE’s Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage included links to the USDA’s standardized recipes for schools, more recipes for Child Nutrition Programs, multicultural recipes, guidance on using spices and seasonings, and guidance on standardized recipes.

Good to Know

Educational Opportunities for Students and Staff from the Yellow Farmhouse Education Center: Please Share with Teachers and Administrators



The new school year brings exciting opportunities to engage students with the world of food and farming. The Yellow Farmhouse Education Center supports classrooms with farmer visits through their Speaker Network, hands-on field trips that bring learning to life, and a Fall Professional Development Day just for educators. For more information and a back-to-school lesson, refer to the [Farm to Culinary Classroom newsletter](#).

Dairy Grant Opportunity for School Meals: Deadline November 17, 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. The application deadline is November 17, 2025. Funding for this program is provided by the Connecticut Milk Promotion Board.

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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_10_01_2025.pdf.

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1400 Independence Avenue, SW
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2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
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