


The School Lunch Tray: October 15, 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

- Schedule for Fall 2025 CSDE Office Hours
- Final Reminder: Last Week to Enter CT Fresh Ed Great Plates Contest, Due October 20, 2025 
- Reminder About Students' Unpaid Meal Charges

Need to Know

- CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 13-25: CT Fresh Ed Brand Launch 
- Updated Start with Half a Cup Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Portioning Guides for Schools 
- Resource Roundup: Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) Manager's Corner Lesson Plans

Good to Know

- Common Ground's Annual Farm and Garden Conference, Saturday, November 8, 2025 
- Reminder: School to Farm Field Trips in October 
- New England Dairy School Breakfast Survey on Lowering Added Sugars: Due October 31, 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.

The School Lunch Tray: October 15, 2025

Action Items

Schedule for Fall 2025 CSDE Office Hours

The CSDE will be holding TEAMS office hours this fall to provide the opportunity for school food authorities (SFAs) to ask questions about different areas of the school nutrition programs. The topics focus on areas specific to the Administrative Review process, but all sponsors are welcome to attend. All office hours will be held on Mondays from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Dates and topics

- October 20, 2025: Certification and Benefit Issuance and Verification
- October 27, 2025: Resource Management
- November 3, 2025: Meal Counting and Claiming
- November 10, 2025: Meal Components and Quantities, Offer versus Serve
- November 24, 2025: Civil Rights, Professional Standards, Local School Wellness Policy, Smart Snacks, School Breakfast Program (SBP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Outreach
- December 1, 2025: Food Safety, Storage, Buy American
- December 8, 2025: Preschool Meals, Meals in the Classroom
- December 1, 2025: Afterschool Snack Program (ASP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
- December 22, 2025: Onsite Monitoring and Checklist

Attendance

Join each office hour using the Teams link below.

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 224 101 050 231 2

Passcode: 79Lf9CN9

Dial in by phone

[+1 860-840-2075,,354637918#](#) United States, Hartford

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 354 637 918#

The School Lunch Tray: October 15, 2025

Final Reminder: Last week to enter CT Fresh Ed Great Plates Contest, Due October 20, 2025



During CT Grown for CT Kids Week, schools across the state showcased their commitment to serving nutritious, locally sourced meals featuring food grown in Connecticut. Many schools captured these efforts through photographs highlighting their vibrant and wholesome meals served to students.

Now is the time to share those images and demonstrate the powerful impact of Connecticut's Farm to School programs, by submitting them to the CT Fresh Ed Great Plates Contest. Submissions are due by October 20, 2025. For instructions, visit the "[Great Plates Contest](#)" section of the CT Fresh Ed webpage. Winners will be recognized at the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) Annual Conference.

Coventry's Great Plate



New Milford's Great Plate



The School Lunch Tray: October 15, 2025

Reminder About Communication Regarding Students' Unpaid Meal Charges

As the school year progresses and the 30-day carryover period concludes, SFAs must inform households of their child's meal eligibility for the USDA's School Breakfast Program (SBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP). SFAs should review their local educational agency's (LEA) unpaid meal charge policies and procedures with cafeteria staff and cashiers to ensure that all applicable personnel are trained on the LEA's protocols for communicating with parents or guardians regarding unpaid meal charges. As a reminder, food service staff should never publicly identify a student's meal eligibility status or discuss this information with the student.

For guidance on these requirements, visit the "[Unpaid Meal Charges](#)" section of the CSDE's Financial Management for School Nutrition Programs webpage and refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Required Policy for Unpaid Meal Charges in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Need to Know

CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 13-25: CT Fresh Ed Brand Launch



CSDE [Operational Memorandum No. 13-25](#) provide information about the launch of CT Fresh Ed, a statewide brand that highlights a shared commitment to serving locally and regionally sourced, unprocessed and minimally processed foods in CNPs. By adopting this brand, program operators can clearly signal to families, schools, and communities that children are receiving fresh, healthy, and culturally responsive meals. Please share as appropriate.

Updated Start with Half a Cup Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Portioning Guides for Schools



Updated versions (dated October 2025) of the CSDE's Start with Half a Cup portion guides for fruits and vegetables are available under "[Start with Half a Cup Portion Guides for Fruits and Vegetables](#)" in the "Portion Control" section of the CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

- Start with Half a Cup Fresh Fruits Portioning Guide for Schools
- Start with Half a Cup Fresh Vegetables Portioning Guide for Schools

These portion guides provide information on the weight or measure that provides $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of different fresh fruits and vegetables. Each guide is available in two different sizes ($8\frac{1}{2}$ by 14 inches and 11 by 17 inches) for use in school kitchens. The updated versions include new fruits and vegetables that have been recently added to the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#). The CSDE encourages SFAs to use these guides for accurate portioning of $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Resource Roundup: Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) Manager's Corner Lesson Plans

The Institute of Child Nutrition's [Manager's Corner](#) is a series of resources designed to give managers/directors short lesson plans, which can be used to train staff on a variety of topics. Each lesson requires about 15 minutes and contains the following: learning objective; importance of the topic; materials needed; instructions on how to present the information; questions to ask staff; and additional resources to strengthen or refresh the manager's and/or director's knowledge. Lessons in the series are grouped by the USDA Key Areas: Nutrition; Operations; and Communications/Marketing.

The School Lunch Tray: October 15, 2025

Good to Know

Common Ground's Annual Farm and Garden Conference, Saturday, November 8, 2025



- **What:** A full day of hands-on workshops open to all
- **When:** Saturday, November 8, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- **Where:** Common Ground, 358 Springside Ave, New Haven
- **Who:** Teachers, urban farmers, backyard gardeners, anyone who wants to incorporate growing food and food justice into their lives or work

More information and registration are available in English and Spanish on Common Ground's [Farm & Garden Conference – Common Ground](#) website.

Reminder: School to Farm Field Trips in October



The CT Fresh Ed Team is offering school to farm field trips that provide opportunities for SFAs and school nutrition staff to visit a farm and learn more about their growing, operations, and processes for selling to schools. A school to farm field trip is planned for every CT Fresh Ed region, but SFAs may attend any convenient date. Join Regional Farm to School Coordinators and peers for a fun fall afternoon on the farm. For dates and locations and to register, visit [CT Fresh ED - School to Farm Field Trips 2025](#).

New England Dairy School Breakfast Survey on Lowering Added Sugars: Due October 31, 2025

New England Dairy has been collaborating with dairy councils nationwide to develop recipes and resources to help schools reduce added sugars at breakfast. They are conducting the [New England Dairy School Breakfast Survey](#) for input from school food authorities about their efforts to reduce added sugars in school breakfast menus. Please complete this survey by October 31, 2025.

Participants will receive a thank-you gift while supplies last. New England Dairy will also provide a link to the recipes and resources after participants submit their survey.

The School Lunch Tray: October 15, 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_10_15_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, audiotope, 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

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.

