

The School Lunch Tray: November 19, 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: Healthy Food Certification (HFC) for Public Schools Due November 30, 2025

Need to Know

- Updated Training Modules for School Year 2025-26: Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs
- Reminder About Requirements for Co-Mingled Meals or Afterschool Snacks
- Resource Roundup: Child Nutrition Staff and Responsibilities

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.

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Action Items

Reminder: Healthy Food Certification (HFC) for Public Schools Due November 30, 2025

The annual HFC documentation for school year 2025-26 is due by November 30, 2025. All HFC districts must submit the online HFC Compliance Survey. In addition, the districts listed in the document below must also submit lists of foods and beverages from all sources.

- [Districts Required to Submit Food and Beverage Lists for School Year 2025-26](#)

For detailed guidance on the HFC documentation requirements, refer the CSDE email from November 7, 2025, which was sent to the district's HFC contact person, food service director, and business manager. For more information, visit the "[Annual HFC Documentation](#)" section of the CSDE's HFC webpage and refer to the guidance below.

- [Guidance for Completing the HFC Compliance Survey](#)
- [Guidance for Submitting Lists of Foods and Beverages for HFC Documentation](#).
- [Completing the Documentation Requirements for HFC](#) (CSDE training module): This training is 9 minutes for districts that are not required to submit lists of foods and beverages and 24 minutes for districts that are required to submit lists of foods and beverages.

For questions, please contact susan.fiore@ct.gov

Need to Know

Updated Training Modules for School Year 2025-26: Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs

The CSDE's Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs has been updated for school year 2025-26 to reflect the current meal pattern requirements and nutrition standards for the NSLP, SBP, and ASP, including the updates required by the USDA final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#). This training program consists of 10 recorded modules that provide comprehensive guidance on complying with the preschool meal patterns for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP, and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP.

- Module 1: Introduction to Training
- Module 2: Preschool Meal Patterns
- Module 3: Comparison of Meal Patterns for Preschool and Grades K-12
- Module 4: Milk Component
- Module 5: Meats/Meat Alternates Component
- Module 6: Vegetables Component
- Module 7: Fruits Component
- Module 8: Grains Component
- Module 9: Meal Service for Preschoolers
- Module 10: Co-mingled Meal Service

This training program applies to all sponsors of the school nutrition programs that serve meals and snacks to preschoolers, including public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs). School nutrition personnel may use this training program to count toward the annual training hours required by the USDA's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Program Professionals.

Reminder About Requirements for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals or Afterschool Snacks

“Co-mingling” is the practice of serving meals or afterschool snacks to a variety of grades in the same service area at the same time. An example is preschoolers eating with grades K-5 or grades K-8. This practice typically occurs due to operational constraints within a school, such as limited time and space.

The USDA allows school food authorities (SFAs) to use the meal pattern of the older grades for preschoolers when the co-mingled meal or afterschool snack service meets the three requirements below.

1. The preschoolers and students from the older grade groups are served meals or ASP snacks together in the same place at the same time.
2. It is hard to tell the preschoolers from older students.
3. It would be operationally difficult to serve different foods or different amounts of foods during the combined meal or ASP snack service.

For example, a school that serves breakfast or lunch to preschool and grades K-5 in the same service area at the same time and meets the above requirements may use the K-5 meal breakfast or lunch meal pattern for both groups. A school that serves afterschool snack to preschool and grades K-8 in the same service area at the same time and meets the above requirements may use the ASP meal pattern for grades K-12 for both groups.

When SFAs use the meal pattern of the older grades for preschoolers during co-mingled meal or snack service, all daily and weekly requirements of the meal pattern for the older grades also apply to the preschool meals or snacks. In addition, if the school implements offer versus serve (OVS) for the older grades at breakfast and lunch, the same OVS requirements also apply to preschool meals. This is the only situation when OVS is allowed for preschoolers. Without co-mingling, OVS is not allowed for preschool meals.

SFAs **must** follow the preschool meal patterns when meals are served to preschoolers in a different area (such as a separate serving line or classroom meals) or at a different time than older grades.

Resources

- [Co-mingled Meals or Afterschool Snacks](#) (CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpage)
- Section 4 of the CSDE’s [Guide to Meal Service Requirements for Preschoolers in the School Nutrition Programs](#).
- [Module 10: Co-mingled Meal Service](#) (CSDE’s Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs)

Resource Roundup: Child Nutrition Staff and Responsibilities

The recently updated (November 2025) CSDE's [Child Nutrition Staff and Responsibilities](#) document includes a list of all CSDE Child Nutrition Program staff and their areas of responsibility.

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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_11_19_2025.pdf.

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