

The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

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. 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.

Action Items

- Join the CSDE for Table Talk Tomorrow Thursday, March 19, 2026
- Register for Mandatory Summer Meal Program Annual Training by Monday March 23, 2026
- Operational Memorandum No. 07-26 Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Annual Notification Requirement for all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) Participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) Due April 10, 2026
- Important Information about the Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System): Applications and Claims
- CNP System Now Open to Submit 2026-27 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement: Due July 1, 2026

Need to Know

- CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program 
- Operational Memorandum No. 06-26: State Severe Need School Breakfast Program Grant for School Year 2025-26

Good to Know

- School Nutrition Association Webinar: Sugar & Sodium Standards: What You Need to Know

The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

Action Items

Join the CSDE for Table Talk Tomorrow Thursday, March 19, 2026

Table Talk will be held on Thursday, March 19, 2026, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. Use the Teams link below to join.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 225 336 668 44

Passcode: muTuBy

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 860-840-2075,,920756855#](#) United States, Hartford

Phone Conference ID: 920 756 855#

[Find a local number](#) | [Reset PIN](#)

[Learn More](#) | [Meeting options](#)

Register for Mandatory Summer Meal Program Annual Training by Monday March 23, 2026

At least one individual from each Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsoring organization **must** attend for the organization to be eligible to participate in SFSP. The CSDE **strongly** encourages Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the National School Lunch Program sponsors to participate as well. Initial registration is one or two individuals per sponsor. For additional registration slots, please email Tyrenzo.Arrington@ct.gov. The week prior to the training, the CSDE will allow additional registrations as space allows.

Registration: Complete the [registration form for the Connecticut Summer Meal Programs Annual Training](#) no later than close of business Monday, March 23, 2026.

Date and Location: Tuesday, March 31, 2026, 450 Columbus Blvd. Hartford, CT 06103

- 8:00-8:30 a.m. check-in for SFSP sponsors
- 10:30 – 10:50 a.m. check-in for SSO sponsors

Refer to the email from Caroline.Cooke@ct.gov on March 16, 2026, for additional details related to parking, security check-in, and training end time for each program. For questions regarding training logistics or a copy of the March 16 training email, contact Tyrenzo Arrington at 860-713-6556 or Tyrenzo.Arrington@ct.gov.

The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

Operational Memorandum No. 07-26 Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Annual Notification Requirement for all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) Participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) Due April 10, 2026

All NSLP and SBP sponsors must submit school-level CEP eligibility data to the CSDE no later than **April 10, 2026** (regardless of participation or intent to participate in the CEP). For information on how to access the CNP Application and Claiming System to enter notification data, refer to the CSDE's document, [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) Data Collection Guidance for School-level Eligibility Information](#). Information regarding the CEP application process for SY 2026-27 will be issued in a few weeks.

The steps for collecting data to update the annual Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) notification lists are outlined in [Operational Memorandum No. 07-26, Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) Annual Notification Requirement for all Local Educational Agencies \(LEAs\) Participating in the National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) and/or the School Breakfast Program \(SBP\) Due April 10, 2026](#).

Residential Child Care Institutions and Special Milk Program sponsors are exempt from this requirement.

The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

Important Information about the Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System): Applications and Claims

School Year (SY) 2026-27 in the CNP Online Application and Claiming System has **been opened to prepare the system for upcoming program submissions**. Do **NOT** start your SY 2026-27 National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP) sponsor or site applications including the uploading of attachments. The CSDE will notify sponsors when it is time to start the online application process for SY 2026-27.

School Nutrition Programs Connecticut

Applications | Claims | Compliance | Reports | Security | Search | Year | Help | Log Out

Applications > Application Packet > School Year: 2026 - 2027

2026 - 2027 Application Packet

Do not complete the 2026-2027 application until instructed by the CSDE.

Packet Submitted Date:
Packet Approved Date:
Packet Original Approval Date:
Packet Status: Not Submitted

Type of Agency: Educational Institution
Type of SNP Organization: Public

Action	Attention	Form Name	Latest Version	Status
View Modify	➔	Sponsor Application	Original	Pending Validation
Details	➔	Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Schedule Checklist Summary		Site Eligibility Missing

Site Applications	Approved	Pending	Return for Correction	Denied	Withdrawn/Closed	Error	Total Applications
School Nutrition Program	0	7	0	0	0	0	7
Seamless Summer Option	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

< Back Submit for Approval Withdraw Packet

[Show Packet History](#)

When SY 2026-27 is open, the CNP System will always open to SY 2026-27. This changes how to navigate the system to access the SY 2025-26 Sponsor Application and monthly claims (July 2025-June 2026) for the NSLP and SBP. Please see the instructions below for navigating the CNP System back to SY 2025-26.

1. To access SY 2025-26 for the application and claims, sponsors **MUST first change the school year to 2025-2026**. Click on **YEAR**.

School Nutrition Programs Connecticut

Applications | Claims | Compliance | Reports | Security | Search | Programs | Year | Help | Log Out

Programs

School Nutrition Programs

The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

2. Select **2025-26**.

Currently, there are 3 School Year(s) available. Select the year you wish to access.

School Year	Date Range	Application Packet
 2026 - 2027	07/01/2026 - 06/30/2027	Not Started
 2025 - 2026	07/01/2025 - 06/30/2026	Application Packet on File
2024 - 2025	07/01/2024 - 06/30/2025	Application Packet on File

Questions may be directed to your [CSDE school nutrition team member](#).

The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

CNP System Now Open to Submit 2026-27 Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement: Due July 1, 2026

The HFC application module of the CSDE's [Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CNP System) is now open for submitting the 2026-27 HFC Statement. Please review the important information below.

- **Deadline:** All public school sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must submit the 2026-27 HFC Statement and upload their final board-approved minutes by **July 1, 2026**.
- **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 2026-27 application process before beginning HFC Statement:** The district must enroll in the 2026-27 application process for the school nutrition programs before the 2026-27 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](#). **Note:** 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 2026-27](#) 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 2026-27. 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. 03-26: Requirements for Submitting the Healthy Food Certification \(HFC\) Statement](#). 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.

The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

Need to Know

CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program



Visit the CT Fresh Ed website to access a list of approved sponsors, apply to participate, submit requests for reimbursement, and check current allocations. The CSDE is currently accepting requests for payment. These resources are available in the [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program](#) section of the CSDE's CT Fresh Ed website.

The CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program provides funding to eligible USDA Child Nutrition Program sponsors to support the purchase of locally and regionally sourced, unprocessed and minimally processed foods. This program strengthens local agriculture while supporting the availability of nutritious meals statewide.

For more information, refer to [Operational Memorandum No. 2-26: CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program](#) and the resources below.

- [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program Questions and Answers](#)
- [CT Fresh Ed: Buy Local Program School Year 2025-26 Allocations for Eligible School Food Authorities](#)

Operational Memorandum No. 06-26: State Severe Need School Breakfast Program Grant for School Year 2025-26

The CSDE's [Operational Memorandum No. 06-26: State Severe Need School Breakfast Program Grant for School Year 2025-26](#) outlines the criteria for payment of the State Severe Need School Breakfast Program Grant and includes the list of school food authorities (SFAs) with sites that qualify for this grant. SFAs will receive approximately \$2,592 per eligible site. For questions about this information, please contact Susan Alston at susan.alston@ct.gov.

The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

Good to Know

School Nutrition Association Webinar: Sugar & Sodium Standards: What You Need to Know

This webinar will provide a practical overview of the new USDA sugar and sodium requirements and what they mean for school nutrition programs, including the latest guidelines, timelines for compliance, and strategies for identifying products that meet the standards. This session will provide clear steps to prepare for changes, ensure compliance, and make informed product choices. Implications for acceptance and participation will be shared from a district perspective.

- Date and time: March 18, 2026, 3:00 p.m.
 - More information and registration:
<https://training.schoolnutrition.org/courses/128198/webinars/91633>
-

The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

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/2026/slt_03_18_2026.pdf.



The School Lunch Tray: March 18, 2026

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.