

The School Lunch Tray: May 27, 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

- CSDE Bureau of Special Education and CSDE Office of Student Support Services issued Operational Memorandum No. 26-01: Providing Meals to Students Outplaced Pursuant to Individualized Education Program
- Operational Memorandum No. 10-26: Payment of Fiscal Year 2025-26 State Funds for the National School Lunch Program
- Final Reminder: CT Fresh Ed: Compass Due June 1, 2026 
- Last Table Talk for School Year 2025-26 on Thursday, May 28, 2026
- CSDE Virtual Training: School Year (SY) 2026-27 Online Application Process for the School Nutrition Programs, Monday, June 1, 2026
- Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership Virtual Training, August 4, 11, and 18, 2026: Registration Deadline is June 26, 2026

Need to Know

- CSDE Crediting Resources for School Year 2026-27
- Updated Resources for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs

Good to Know

- UConn Extension Virtual Training: Maintaining the Garden and Developing a Work Plan, June 1, 2026 

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Action Items

CSDE Bureau of Special Education and CSDE Office of Student Support Services issued Operational Memorandum No. 26-01: Providing Meals to Students Outplaced Pursuant to Individualized Education Program

On May 22, 2026, the CSDE Bureau of Special Education issued [Operational Memorandum No. 26-01: Providing Meals to Students Outplaced Pursuant to Individualized Education Program](#). This memorandum provides guidance to local educational agencies (LEA) regarding the provision of meals to students with disabilities who have been placed in an out-of-district placement setting by the student's Planning and Placement Team (PPT), in accordance with the student's individualized education program (IEP). This memo is located under "[Eligibility](#)" in the "Guidance for School Food Authorities" section of the CSDE's Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Operational Memorandum No. 10-26: Payment of Fiscal Year 2025-26 State Funds for the National School Lunch Program

The CSDE's [Operational Memorandum No. 10-26: Payment of Fiscal Year 2025-26 State Funds for the National School Lunch Program](#) outlines the process used for the payment of fiscal year 2025-26 state funds ("state match") paid as reimbursement to school food authorities (SFA) that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The memo contains an attachment that lists the reimbursement amount that eligible SFAs will receive. Please review and share with appropriate staff members. This memo is available on the CSDE's Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs webpage.

Final Reminder: CT Fresh Ed: Compass Due June 1, 2026



The CT Fresh Ed: Compass is due June 1, 2026. Visit the [Compass](#) section of the CSDE's CT Fresh Ed Compass webpage for guidance and resources, including the CT Fresh Ed: Compass Training from February 5, 2026. School food authorities (SFAs) can reach out to their [Regional Farm to School Coordinator](#) for support with the CT Fresh Ed: Compass.

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Last Table Talk for School Year 2025-26 on Thursday, May 28, 2026

The last scheduled Table Talk for school year 2025-26 will be held on Thursday, May 14, 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](#)

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CSDE Virtual Training: School Year (SY) 2026-27 Online Application Process for the School Nutrition Programs, Monday, June 1, 2026

The CSDE's virtual training, School Year (SY) 2026-27 Online Application Process for the School Nutrition Programs, helps sponsors get ahead of the busy back-to-school season by starting preparation now for the SY 2026-27 online application process for the school nutrition programs. While the online application process cannot be fully completed until the new school year begins, this training helps sponsors complete as much as possible in advance, so everything is ready to go in the fall. Sponsors will be able to refresh their knowledge, avoid common errors, and ask questions.

This training is encouraged for all NSLP sponsors and is **required** for directors who: have served in their position for two years or less; had their SY 2025-26 NSLP application packet returned three or more times for corrections; or have new staff or current staff who would benefit from a refresher on the online application process.

- **Date and time:** Monday, June 1, 2026, from 2:00-3:00 p.m.
- **Attendance link:** Registration is not required. Please use the link below to join the training.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/261588496339579?p=BDNsq3jtse4n64pPFA>

Meeting ID: 261 588 496 339 579

Passcode: xr6fu3gA

[Need help?](#) | [System reference](#)

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Dial in by phone

+1 860-840-2075,,597355996# United States, Hartford

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 597 355 996#

Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership Virtual Training, August 4, 11, and 18, 2026: Registration Deadline is June 26, 2026

The CSDE is hosting a great training opportunity for sponsors of the school nutrition programs in August 2026. The Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) [Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership](#) Lit, is a 3-day **no cost** virtual training program planned specifically for new and aspiring directors of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. School Nutrition Program Consultant, Lonnie Burt, will be back again this year to conduct the three-day webinar.

All school nutrition directors hired within the past year are **required** to take part in the virtual *Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership* training program. This training will take place on August 4, 11, and 18, 2026, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This training will provide an overview of the many responsibilities of the school nutrition director. The goal is to build the new director's knowledge base, provide multiple tools and resources, allow opportunities to network, and improve confidence in operating the school nutrition programs.

Space is limited to 40 participants, so register today to reserve a seat. Note that priority will be given to new school nutrition directors and *attendees must be able to download all training materials. No hard copies will be mailed.*

The registration deadline is **June 26, 2026**. For more information refer to the attached flyer.

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Need to Know

CSDE Crediting Resources for School Year 2026-27

The CSDE crediting resources for school year 2026-27 are now available. These documents provide guidance on crediting specific foods in the meal patterns for grades K-12 and the preschool meal patterns (ages 1-5). As applicable, updates include the requirements of the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#), effective June 8, 2026. The current versions are dated May 2026 and are available on the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage

Milk Component

- [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Milk Component in School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Offering Lactose-Free and Lactose-Reduced Milk in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Using Bulk Milk Dispensers in the School Nutrition Programs](#)

Meats/Meat Alternates Component

- [Crediting Beans, Peas, and Lentils in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Deli Meats in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Yogurt in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the School Nutrition Programs](#)

Vegetables Component and Fruits Component

- [Crediting Juices in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Smoothies in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Soups in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program](#)

Grains Component

- [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for the Grains Component in School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Enriched Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Crediting Grain-based Desserts in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#)
- [Crediting Whole Grains in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for the School Nutrition Programs](#)

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- [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#)
 - [Guide to Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
 - [How to Identify Creditable Grains for the Preschool Meal Patterns of the School Nutrition Programs](#)
 - [How to Use the Grain Ounce Equivalents Chart for the School Nutrition Programs](#)
 - [When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
 - Weekly Whole Grain-rich Percentage
 - [Instructions for the Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the School Nutrition Programs for Grades K-12](#)
 - [Calculating the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
 - [Worksheet to Calculate the Weekly Percentage of Whole Grain-rich Menu Items in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#)
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Updated Resources for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs

Updated versions (dated May 2026) of the CSDE's resources for meal modifications below are available. These updates include the requirements of the USDA final rule, [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#), effective June 8, 2026. The guidance in these documents applies to meal modifications for grades K-12 and preschool (ages 1-5) in all public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that participate in the USDA school nutrition programs.

- **CSDE guide:** [Guide to Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Overview**
 - [Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
 - [Summary Chart of the Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Fluid Milk Substitutes (Nondairy Beverages)**
 - [Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
 - [Identifying Products that Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Procedural Safeguards:** [Requirements for Procedural Safeguards for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** [Sample Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\) for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#)
- **Self-assessment:** [Self-assessment of Local Practices for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs](#)

Please discard any versions downloaded prior to today and replace them with the current versions dated May 2026.

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Good to Know

UConn Extension Virtual Training: Maintaining the Garden and Developing a Work Plan, June 1, 2026



UConn Extension is partnering with the Connecticut Department of Agriculture to provide a three-part virtual training series about school gardens. This series is designed to be relevant to individuals or teams new to school gardens, as well as those with established school garden experience. Participants who sign up for the series will be added to all training communications and will receive the materials and recording from the first training on April 27.

The next training, Putting Down Roots: Maintaining the Garden and Developing a Work Plan, is on June 1. Participants will learn best practices to ensure school gardens produce food, as well as opportunities for students, staff, and community members to engage.

- **Date and time:** June 1 from 3:30 - 4:45 p.m.
- **Registration and more information:** Visit UConn Extension's [Training Opportunities](#) webpage.

For questions, contact Abby DuBois at abigail.dubois@uconn.edu.

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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/2026/slt_05_27_2026.pdf.



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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

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INTRODUCTION TO SCHOOL NUTRITION LEADERSHIP Lite



**Virtual Training Program: August 4, 11, and 18, 2026
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily**

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is hosting the Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) [Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership Lite](#). This three-day virtual training program is intended for new and aspiring school nutrition program directors. Lessons provide an overview of school nutrition programs, define the role and responsibilities of a director, and review the relationship between local policies and state/federal regulations. **This training is required for new school nutrition directors hired within the past year.**

Registration

Register by **June 26, 2026**, at [Registration for Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership](#). There is no cost to attend but preregistration is required. *Attendees must be able to download all training materials. No hard copies will be mailed.*

Additional Training Hours

The ICN strongly recommends that participants take an additional 17.5 hours of ICN iLearn online courses prior to the first training day. More information will be provided after participants register.

Professional Standards

Key Areas: 1: Nutrition; 2: Operations, 3: Administration, and 4: Communications and Marketing

Lesson Topics

- Program accountability, integrity, and the role of the director
- Reimbursable school meals
- Meal accommodations
- Food production and operation management
- Procurement and inventory management
- Customer experience, merchandising, and food presentation
- Human resource management
- Workplace safety
- Federal regulations
- Farm to School
- Effective goal setting using Smart Goals
- Marketing your school nutrition programs
- Essential Key Performance Indicators series
- Food Safety
- Designing an emergency preparedness plan

More Details

- **Training link:** Attendees will receive the training link and applicable materials after registering.
- **CEUs:** 24.0 CEU hours
- **Questions?** Contact Erica Covington-Ford, ICN Training Coordinator, at erica@theicn.org.



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