

The School Lunch Tray: June 24, 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

- Final Reminder for CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 08-26: Paid Lunch Equity Guidance for School Year 2026-27: PLE Request Due June 30, 2026
- Final Reminder for Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026
- Final Reminder for Interschool Agreements in HFC Schools for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026

Need to Know

- Summer EBT (S-EBT) Benefit Issuances for 2026
- Institute of Child Nutrition Webinar: Procuring with Efficiency: Local Food Purchasing in Schools, June 25, 2026
- Gratitude and Transitions

Good to Know

- School Nutrition Association's (SNA) Advocacy in Action Webinar, June 29, 2026

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Action Items

Final Reminder for CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 08-26: Paid Lunch Equity Guidance for School Year 2026-27: PLE Request Due June 30, 2026

The CSDE's [Operational Memorandum 08-26: Paid Lunch Equity Guidance for School Year 2026-27](#) provides guidance regarding the paid lunch equity (PLE) allowances for school year 2026-27. Note that a PLE request is part of the memo and must be completed by June 30, 2026.

Final Reminder for Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026

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. Refer to [Operational Memorandum No. 03-26: Requirements for Submitting the HFC Statement for School Year 2026-27](#) for details. Districts that do not meet this deadline are not eligible for HFC in school year 2026-27.

As a reminder, **only the district's authorized signer 1 or 2 is authorized to certify and submit the HFC Statement** in the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System). Food service directors can see "Healthy Food Certification" in the CNP System's list of options but cannot access the current year's HFC Statement or enter any information. Once the district's authorized signer 1 or 2 completes the HFC statement, the food service director can view it.

The "[Annual HFC Application](#)" section of the CSDE's HFC webpage provides information on the required steps for submitting the annual HFC Statement. The CSDE's 21-minute video, [Completing the Application Process for HFC](#), provides detailed guidance on the HFC application process.

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Final Reminder for Interschool Agreements in HFC Schools for School Year 2026-27: Due July 1, 2026

Full-service Interschool Agreements for schools that choose the healthy food option of HFC must be submitted to the CSDE by **July 1, 2026**. [CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 04-26 Interschool Agreements for School Year 2026-27](#) provides guidance on the requirements and deadlines for submitting interschool agreements to the CSDE. Sponsors that vend or satellite meals to another district are required to submit and receive approval of an annual interschool agreement to the CSDE. This form must be signed by the authorized representative for the providing sponsor and the recipient site.

The interschool agreement forms are available under “1” on the CSDE’s [Forms for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Operational Memorandum No. 04-26 is available on the CSDE’s [School Nutrition Operational Memos 2026](#) webpage.

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Need to Know

Summer EBT (S-EBT) Benefit Issuances for 2026

Over the weekend of June 20th, the first batch of issuances was processed for students that automatically qualify for S-EBT benefits. A total number of 189,839 households received issuances, accounting for 294,629 children. This issuance totaled over 35 million dollars in benefits. Additional issuances will continue over the summer months for qualifying students and applicants. Households can still submit applications through August 31, 2026, to receive S-EBT benefits for this summer!

An updated [Summer EBT Outreach Flyer for Families](#) is available. This flyer provides an updated QR code for households to access the DSS website for further information. It replaces the flyer sent earlier this spring.

Institute of Child Nutrition Webinar: Procuring with Efficiency: Local Food Purchasing in Schools, June 25, 2026

Effective and compliant procurement is essential to a successful school meals program. In this webinar, school meal operators will explore the core principles of sound procurement, including practical strategies for forecasting needs, tips for developing strong bids, and sourcing fresh, high-quality, local foods that meet program requirements. Foundational strategies for using USDA Foods, meeting federal requirements for local purchasing, and applying geographic preference to increase the availability of locally grown foods in school meals will also be shared. Join to gain insight for building strong partnerships with farmers, vendors, co-ops, and distributors to strengthen and support local supply chains.

- **Date and time:** June 25, 2026, 3:00-4:00 p.m.
- **Registration:** [Procuring with Efficiency: Local Food Purchasing in Schools](#)

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Gratitude and Transitions

Sent on behalf of Shannon Yearwood, Bureau Chief, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs.

Dear Child Nutrition Partners,

It is with both gratitude and mixed emotions that I share that Susan Alston will be concluding her service with the Connecticut State Department of Education's Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs on June 29, 2026, as she and her family begin an exciting new chapter.

For more than two decades, Susan has been a dedicated advocate for Connecticut's children and a trusted partner to schools, sponsors, community organizations, and colleagues across our state. Her contributions have strengthened the Child Nutrition Programs, helping ensure children have access to nutritious meals while supporting the schools, communities, and local economies that depend on these programs. Through her thoughtful guidance, extensive knowledge, and genuine commitment to service, Susan has built lasting professional relationships and friendships throughout the Child Nutrition community.

While we are excited for Susan and her family, her departure will be deeply felt. The impact of her work will continue for years to come through the programs, relationships, and people she has influenced throughout her career. We ask for your patience and partnership as our team navigates this transition and continues efforts to strengthen and align bureau operations to best support program implementation and regulatory compliance. Updated points of contact and county assignments will be shared over the coming week.

On behalf of the entire Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, I extend my sincere appreciation to Susan for her extraordinary dedication and service to Connecticut's children. Her contributions have left a lasting legacy that will continue to benefit our state for years to come. Please help congratulate and thank Susan for her tireless commitment to this work for the time we have been fortunate enough to have her on this team.

Below is a message Susan would like to share with all of you.

I wanted to send a quick note to let you all know that my last day with Child Nutrition will be Monday, June 29th. My family and I have decided to embark on a new adventure and are moving south.

While I am excited about starting this new chapter, I would be remiss if I didn't also reflect on the sadness that comes with closing this one. After twenty years, it is difficult to put into words what this journey has meant to me.

As I have been cleaning out my desk drawers in the office, I came across my college transcript and was reminded that I earned a less than average grade in an Introduction to Nutrition class

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during my first semester away at school. It still makes me laugh when I think about where I ended up spending the last twenty years of my career. And yes, I received a stern talking to from my father about spending more time studying and less time socializing if I wanted to go back for the second semester.

Looking back, I feel incredibly fortunate to have worked alongside some of the most dedicated and hardworking people I have ever met. Whether in schools, districts, at the state level or through partnering organizations, we have all shared a common purpose in ensuring that the children in our communities and students in our schools have access to nutritious meals every day.

The impact of that work cannot be overstated, and I am proud to have been a small part of it. I will forever be in awe of all that you do. Your unwavering commitment to the mission, your flexibility in the face of challenges, and your remarkable ability to adapt to last-minute program changes while never losing sight of what matters most.... feeding the students.

Thank you for your partnership, your commitment, and your friendship. I wish you all continued success, and I know the important work of feeding and supporting children will remain in very capable hands.

With much gratitude,

Susan Alston

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Good to Know

School Nutrition Association's (SNA) Advocacy in Action Webinar, June 29, 2026

Join the SNA Government Affairs Team on Monday, June 29, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. for the SNA's Advocacy in Action webinar. This webinar will include the topics below.

- Federal appropriations updates, including House passage of FY27 appropriations and what to watch as the Senate appropriations process moves forward.
- The latest on child nutrition policy, including federal bills being introduced and an upcoming proposed rule that could affect school meal programs.
- Ways to get involved, with practical advocacy steps members can take to stay engaged and support school nutrition priorities at the federal and state levels.
- A recap of the June 4 Congressional Briefing celebrating 80 years of the National School Lunch Act.

Date and time: June 29, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.

Registration: [SNA Advocacy in Action - June 2026 | SNA Training Zone](#)

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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_06_24_2026.pdf.



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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
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2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
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