

The School Lunch Tray: August 26, 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 Virtual Office Hour on August 31, 2026: Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) for School Year 2026-27
- CSDE Virtual Office Hour on September 2, 2026: Application Processing and Direct Certification
- Food Safety Inspection Report for School Year 2025-26 Due September 30, 2026
- Completion of Site Pricing on the Annual Application for the School Nutrition Programs in the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System)
- Last Chance to Receive a Free CT Grown for CT Kids Week Promotional Kit 
- USDA Foods Bonus Purchase Option: Order Due Date Monday August 31, 2026, at Noon

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Need to Know

- School Food Authority (SFA) Request for Proposal (RFP) Process Training for Districts Outsourcing their Child Nutrition Programs
- Summer EBT (S-EBT) Eligibility Period reminders
- Important Reminder: Disaster Preparedness for School Food Authorities (SFAs)
- School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) Annual Conference: October 29 and 30, 2026
- Guidance for Notifying Parents of a Child's Eligibility for Free or Reduced-price Meals
- Reminder for School Lunch About Requirements for Nondairy Beverages (Fluid Milk Substitutes)

Good to Know

- Updated USDA Resources: The Real Food Guides to School Breakfast and School Lunch for Families
- Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: Afterschool Meals Matter: Strategies and Practical Takeaways, August 27, 2026

Action Items

CSDE Virtual Office Hour on August 31, 2026: Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) for School Year 2026-27

The CSDE will conduct a virtual Teams office hour for school food authorities (SFAs) on August 31, 2026, from 2:00-3:00 pm. This session will provide an overview of the ASP, including eligibility requirements and the documentation required for participation. Use the Teams link below to attend this session.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/265855520949799?p=hSOpJtFqhAT4V1IBm4>

Meeting ID: 265 855 520 949 799

Passcode: 46ND2Rj6

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

Dial in by phone

[+1 860-840-2075](tel:+18608402075), [135474382](tel:+135474382) United States, Hartford

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 135 474 382#

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CSDE Virtual Office Hour on September 2, 2026: Application Processing and Direct Certification

The CSDE will conduct a virtual Teams office hour on September 2, 2026, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m., covering the topics of application certification and direct certification. This will be a great opportunity to ask questions regarding these topics. All determining officials and direct certification contacts are encouraged to attend. Use the Teams link below to attend this session. Note that office hours are not recorded.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/285781892904253?p=s6PVZQvkAq7TDg6GsR>

Meeting ID: 285 781 892 904 253

Passcode: uH3Hc34v

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Food Safety Inspection Report for School Year 2025-26 Due September 30, 2026

The Food Safety Inspection Report for school year (SY) 2025-26 must be completed in the [Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs \(CNP System\)](#) by September 30, 2026. As required in section 9(h) of the National School Lunch Act (NSLA), 42 U.S.C. 1758(h), at least twice each year, schools must obtain a food safety inspection conducted by a state or local agency responsible for such inspections. As part of that requirement, the CSDE must annually collect the total number of inspections conducted at each SFA and report the number to the USDA Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA) by November 15, 2026. The food safety inspections requirement applies to all food preparation service sites and service-only sites.

Sponsors must complete the Food Safety Inspection Report for SY 2025-26 in the CNP System at the same time they complete and submit the annual sponsor application, but no later than September 30, 2026. Guidance begins on page 27 of the CSDE's guide, [Updating the Sponsor Application for School Nutrition Programs](#). The Food Safety Inspection Report can be completed by anyone who has access to the CNP System.

Food safety inspections for facilities not under the jurisdiction of the local or state health department: Some schools or facilities (such as schools or group homes operated by the Department of Children and Families) do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Health (DPH) and therefore, will not be inspected by DPH or the local health department. **However, food safety inspections conducted by the state agency that licenses the facility qualify toward meeting the requirement of two food safety inspections annually.**

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While the CSDE recognizes that there may be difficulty in obtaining the two food safety inspections, SFAs are responsible for requesting such inspections and documenting such efforts. When two health inspections are not conducted, each sponsor is responsible for requesting the inspections and documenting these efforts (refer to the CSDE's [Sample Letter for Food Safety Health Inspection for the National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\) and School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#)).

Completion of Site Pricing on the Annual Application for the School Nutrition Programs in the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System)

Some sponsors completed their annual application for the school nutrition programs in the CNP System prior to opting into receiving the [Connecticut School Meals: Readiness in School Everyday \(RISE\)](#) funds. Therefore, the **Pricing Information** section for each school might not reflect the correct student pricing. The CSDE reminds sponsors that if the district opted into the RISE funds, the pricing for each school must indicate the following for the **Pricing Information** for each school:

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP): **Pricing – Reduced-price Charge Waived**
- School Breakfast Program (SBP): **Non-Pricing – Universal Free**

The image below shows a correct example.

Pricing Information

14. **PRICING:** Insert prices charged for each program in which this site will participate (e.g. if the full price for lunch is \$2.00, insert 2.00 under NSLP and in the column next to Paid).

NON-PRICING: Select if students will not be charged for meals.

REDUCED CHARGE WAIVED: Only paid students and adults are charged for meals.

NOTE: The maximum charge for reduced-price meals is \$0.40 for lunch, \$0.30 for breakfast, and \$0.15 cents for snacks. Do not enter dollar signs in the meal pricing fields.

Meal Type	Pricing Information	Paid Price	Reduced Price	Adult Price
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)	Pricing - Reduced Charge Waived	3.50	0.00	5.00
School Breakfast Program (SBP)	Non-Pricing - Universal Free			3.75
Afterschool Snack Program (ASP)				

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Last Chance to Receive a Free CT Grown for CT Kids Week Promotional Kit



SFAs participating in CT Grown for CT Kids Week can receive a Free CT Grown for CT Kids Week Promotional Kit by filling out the [CT Grown for CT Kids Week Registration Form](#) by the end of August. This form allows CSDE to track the number of schools celebrating this special week.

This year's theme —“Breakfast and Beyond – CT Fresh all Day Long” is especially relevant as school breakfast is available to all students at no charge this year. SFAs looking for assistance finding local breakfast or lunch items or planning an activity should contact their [Regional Coordinators](#).

USDA Foods Bonus Purchase Option: Order Due Date Monday August 31, 2026, at Noon

USDA Foods is offering bonus [raisins \(100293\)](#) for a limited time. These raisins will be entitlement free, but HPC delivery fees still apply. Please make sure to order the raisins under “bonus” and not “entitlement.”

The catalog will open in Web Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) on Thursday, August 27, and will close at noon on Monday, August 31, 2026.

Please forecast carefully, and order only what schools can use, as Recipient Agencies (RAs) will be responsible for taking delivery of all cases of bonus items ordered. Orders may be adjusted or cancelled if there is not enough interest. As a reminder, the bonus raisins are in addition to any raisins that RAs ordered from the school year 2026-27 catalog. RAs should check their Requisition Status Report in WBSCM for SY 2026-27 prior to placing any bonus orders.

Placing Orders in WBSCM

Log into WBSCM. Use the WBSCM training options to assist with placing Domestic Requisitions (AKA: USDA Foods Orders). In WBSCM, refer to Home >> WBSCM Training >> Role Specific Documents >> Domestic Requisitions and Sales Orders – RA >> Create Domestic Requisition RA.

Print the instructions to a PDF or download them to the RA's computer or download a slideshow (this is recommended). For assistance with placing orders, contact the WBSCM Help Desk. The Help Desk email and phone number are under the “Help” tab on the home page.

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Need to Know

School Food Authority (SFA) Request for Proposal (RFP) Process Training for Districts Outsourcing their Child Nutrition Programs

The CSE's mandatory RFP Process training will be held on September 9, 2026, from 9am - 12pm via Microsoft Teams. This training is required for:

- districts that need to procure a new food service management company (FSMC) contract;
- districts that wish to go out to bid early; and
- districts that wish to go out to bid for the first time.

All business officials from districts planning to go out to bid must register and attend this training to review the procurement process. New contracts must be executed by June 30, 2027, to ensure all costs are deemed allowable and payable via the non-profit school food service account.

- [2026-27 FSMC RFP Process Training Registration](#)

Districts that plan to use an outside consultant to either complete or assist in this process must ensure that the consultant is properly procured based on local procurement policies (micro, small, formal process) and thresholds. The consultant must also attend this training.

The RFP and supporting documents will be released a few days prior to the training to all SFA individuals who have registered.

- **Who should attend:** Business Official, Procurement Official and staff tasked with completing any part of the RFP/Contract process.
- **Who should not attend:** FSMC staff, including your current food service director
- **Date and time:** Wednesday September 9, 2026, 9a.m. – 12 p.m.
- **How:** Online via Microsoft TEAMS
- **Questions:** Contact Andy Paul at 860.807.2048 or andrew.paul@ct.gov.

At this point, the district should not be meeting with individual FSMCs unless all potential FSMCs have been invited to meet with the district or board of education. The district may release a Request for Information (RFI) if they want information from all potential vendors. The district should also be aware of their discussions with the current vendor to ensure there is free and open competition throughout this process.

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Note: The timeline for this year's process will be different from previous years. Districts must have their RFP reviewed, approved, and posted by January 29, 2027, with a 45-day open period. This will allow for proper transitions for FSMCs moving into and out of districts. Please start planning accordingly. The entire RFP/Contract process will be contained within the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System). The CSDE will review the document upload process during the RFP Process training.

Districts with expiring contracts as of June 30, 2027

The list below includes all currently contracting districts with expiring contracts as of June 30, 2027, that must procure a new contract, if they continue to outsource their Child Nutrition Programs.

- Achievement Frist, Amistad, Elm City
- Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES)
- Bethany School District
- Hamden School District
- Killingly School District
- Lebanon School District
- Naugatuck School District
- New Fairfield School District
- Newtown School District
- North Stonington School District
- Norwich Free Academy
- Oxford School District
- Plainfield School District
- Portland School District
- Regional School District 05
- Regional School District 09
- Regional School District 18
- Ridgefield School District
- Shelton School District
- South Windsor School District
- Stratford School District
- Wethersfield School District

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Summer EBT (S-EBT) Eligibility Period reminders

The 2026 S-EBT program will be concluding on August 31, 2026. Applications for the S-EBT benefits for summer 2026 will not be accepted after this date. However, applications will continue to be accepted for consideration for summer 2027. Approved applications may be used to determine a student's eligibility for free or reduced-price meals if certain federal guidelines are met.

Please remember that the SEBT Application Eligibility approval letter is **not** a valid document for use when approving school meal applications. Food Service Directors should only use those documents outlined in the guidelines when verifying or approving school meal applications (refer to CSDE's resource, [Processing Applications for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Free Milk in the School Nutrition Programs](#)).

Additionally, the only way that a student may have free or reduced meals conferred by S-EBT eligibility is if they appear on the Direct Certification/S-EBT weekly distribution list with a benefit authorization code of FE or RE. Note that S-EBT eligibility is not considered direct certification since the household submitted an application to the S-EBT team for review and approval.

For additional information about S-EBT, visit the [Summer EBT](#) webpage.

Important Reminder: Disaster Preparedness for School Food Authorities (SFAs)

The [USDA Foods Program Disaster Manual](#) and the CSDE's document, [Disaster Feeding Guidance for School Food Authorities Using USDA Foods](#), address a SFA's response to disasters. Please review and share with appropriate staff. If there is a Presidential declaration, HPC Foodservice will have priority to assist the State of Connecticut.

The [USDA's The Food Safety Emergency Response Pocket Guide](#) (also available in Spanish) supports school food service professionals in their response to food safety emergencies caused by disasters and weather-related events. An additional resource includes the Fact Sheet, [USDA Foods During Disaster](#).

SFAs may be called upon by town officials or the Red Cross to serve food to the public through congregate feeding. SFAs that use USDA Foods must keep records of the USDA Foods used and any transportation costs. If there is a Presidential declaration, the CSDE FDP will work with SFAs on the USDA application process for replacement and reimbursement. The USDA provides replacement in situations of distress only to the extent that Food and Nutrition Service funds are available. If districts open shelters that involve congregate feeding, please keep the FDP informed by emailing Monica Pacheco at monica.pacheco@ct.gov or Allison Calhoun-White at allison.calhoun-white@ct.gov.

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School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT) Annual Conference: October 29 and 30, 2026

Mark the calendar for the SNACT Annual Conference on October 29 and 30, 2026, at the Mystic Marriott. This year's theme is *Fueling Futures: Growing Impact in School Nutrition*. The conference will feature three leadership sessions with nationally recognized speaker Joe Pettit, as well as culinary demonstrations, a trade show, and the opportunity to network with fellow colleagues. Thursday night will feature a Carnival Extravaganza with Bingo and awards. For more information, visit SNACT's [Annual Conference](#) webpage. For information on how to become a SNACT member, visit the [SNACT Membership](#) webpage.

Guidance for Notifying Parents of a Child's Eligibility for Free or Reduced-price Meals

The CSDE's document, [Guidance for Notifying Parents of a Child's Eligibility for Free or Reduced-price Meals](#), provides guidance addressing how and when to notify parents and guardians regarding the household application materials and direct certification. It also includes important information regarding verification. Please review and share.

Reminder for School Lunch About Requirements for Nondairy Beverages (Fluid Milk Substitutes)

SFAs that choose to offer nondairy beverages (such as fortified, plant-based milks like soy milk) to all students at lunch must ensure that these beverages include the minimum nutrients for fluid milk substitutes (refer [7 CFR 210.10\(d\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#)). Fluid milk substitutes must be fortified in accordance with the Food and Drug Administration's fortification guidelines

Offering nondairy beverages to all students to meet the fluid milk requirement at lunch is an option, not a requirement. SFAs that choose to offer nondairy beverages to all students are no longer required to notify the state agency that they are serving nondairy beverages. In addition, students who request a fluid milk substitute for a non-disability reason are no longer required to submit a written statement requesting a nutritionally equivalent fluid milk substitute.

If an SFA chooses not to offer nondairy beverages to all students, the process for requesting a fluid milk substitute for a non-disability reason and reporting to the state agency is unchanged (refer to [7 CFR 210.10\(d\)\(2\)](#)).

For more information, refer to [USDA Memo SP 01-2026: Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025 – Implementation Requirements for the National School Lunch Program](#).

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Good to Know

Updated USDA Resources: The Real Food Guides to School Breakfast and School Lunch for Families

The USDA updated the fact sheets below to showcase real, nutrient-dense foods that contribute to a balanced school breakfast and lunch and align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030.

- [The Real Food Guide to School Breakfast for Families](#)
 - [The Real Food Guide to School Lunch for Families](#)
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Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) Webinar: Afterschool Meals Matter: Strategies and Practical Takeaways, August 27, 2026

Afterschool meals are more important than ever for reducing hunger, helping students stay engaged and ready to learn, and strengthening connections among schools, community partners, and families. This webinar will explore strategies for strengthening and expanding afterschool meal programs, including outreach, partnerships, site engagement, and menu planning.

- Date and time: August 27, 2026, 3:00 p.m.
 - Registration: [Afterschool Meals Matter Registration](#)
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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_08_26_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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