

## The School Lunch Tray: March 3, 2021

Dear School Sponsors of Child Nutrition Programs:

The School Lunch Tray contains the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) weekly e-mail notifications for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school nutrition programs. This week's topics are listed below.

- Teach, Grow, and Learn with FoodCorps: Now Accepting Applications
- USDA Foods Update on Usage
- USDA Foods Update on HPC
- USDA Foods Ordering Reminder: Deadline to Place Orders is **March 12, 2021**
- Resources for Menu Planning Success: Food Buying Guide and Standardized Recipes
- Updates for Healthy Food Certification (HFC): School Year 2020-21 and School Year 2021-22
- Updated Guidance: Using ESSER I & II Funds for Revenue Loss Related to Food Service
- Resource Roundup: Meal Counting and Claiming for School Nutrition Programs

Please review and share with appropriate staff members. Thank you.



### **Teach, Grow, and Learn with FoodCorps: Now Accepting Applications**

The application is now open to serve with [FoodCorps](#) for the 2021-22 school year. FoodCorps AmeriCorps service members spend a year teaching kids about healthy food in schools through hands-on nutrition and garden lessons, promoting healthy school meals, and fostering a school-wide culture of health. Service members earn a stipend, a year's worth of training and professional development resources, and a network of passionate food educators and school nutrition leaders. This is a great opportunity for folks who are committed to food justice, inspired by strong local communities, and creative in the face of a challenge- like serving during a pandemic.

FoodCorps is accepting applications until all service member positions are filled, but recommends applying early. Learn more and apply at [www.foodcorps.org/apply](http://www.foodcorps.org/apply).

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### **USDA Foods Update on Usage**

As we enter March, Recipient Agencies (RAs) should have used approximately 70 percent of their USDA Foods for this school year. This means having taken delivery of about 70 percent of direct delivery items from the HPC warehouse; having used about 70 percent of pounds of USDA Foods at processors; and having spent approximately 70 percent of the DoD allocation for this school year. As the state distributing agency, it is the FDP's responsibility to monitor all RA usage, and to move product, pounds or dollars from RAs that are not utilizing them to RAs that are. As a reminder, the FDP will continue to accept [Request to Donate USDA Foods forms](#) for any excess direct delivery USDA Foods at any time.

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### **USDA Foods Update on HPC**

As RAs continue to experience difficulty with USDA DoD and USDA Foods deliveries, the FDP would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to keep us updated on the specific issues you are experiencing. Starting this week, DAS and CSDE are conducting weekly meetings to discuss the direct delivery contract concerns. The USDA and the Defense Logistics Agency are also meeting with HPC weekly to discuss the USDA DoD contract. Please continue to e-mail the FDP about any delivery issues. Thank you for your patience as we work to resolve these ongoing contract performance matters.

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### **USDA Foods Ordering Reminder: Deadline to Place Orders is March 12, 2021**

Please remember that all USDA Foods orders must be placed in WBSCM by **March 12, 2021**. Refer to the School Lunch Tray from [February 10, 2021](#), for the details and necessary links for ordering USDA Foods. Contact the [FDP team](#) with any questions.

### Resources for Menu Planning Success: Food Buying Guide and Standardized Recipes

The USDA's Team Nutrition recently provided information regarding updates and reminders about two menu planning resources for schools: The Food Buying Guide and USDA's standardized recipes.

#### *The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*

Team Nutrition has been working behind the scenes to make the Food Buying Guide (FBG) Interactive Web-based Tool and Mobile App even better. User feedback has driven recent updates to the Web-based Tool and Mobile App as part of the ongoing process aimed at improving the FBG. Users now have the ability to:

- access their Favorite foods list from the Homepage;
- create folders to organize Recipe Analysis Workbooks (RAW) on the Web-based Tool and view them on the Mobile App while logged in as a registered user; and
- select the desired Serving Size per Meal Contribution for fruits and vegetables using a drop-down menu on the Web-based Tool (coming soon to the Mobile App).

If you are new to the FBG or looking for FBG training, visit the USDA's [FBG Training Resources](#) webpage to access the resources below.

- A training module series hosted through the Institute of Child Nutrition's [eLearning portal](#)
  - [Module 1](#): Overview of the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs
  - [Module 2](#): Recipe Analysis Workbook (RAW)
  - [Module 3](#): Product Formulation Statements (PFS)
- Four recorded webinars to assist the user in utilizing the innovative features of the tool, including the Exhibit A Grains Tool and the FBG Calculator

#### *Team Nutrition - USDA Standardized Recipes*

It is always a good idea to change up the menu and try new recipes! Team Nutrition's [Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbook for Schools](#) has a variety of standardized recipes for schools focusing on tasty dishes that incorporate dark greens, legumes, and whole grains. All recipes include the meal pattern contribution and nutrient analysis to simplify menu planning. For more USDA standardized recipes, visit the Institute of Child Nutrition's [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#) (CNRB).

### Updates for Healthy Food Certification (HFC): School Year 2020-21 and School Year 2021-22

Beginning this week, public schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) will be receiving different e-mails about the annual HFC Statement for the **current** school year (2020-21) and **next** school year (2021-22). Please read all emails carefully, and review the information below, to ensure that you are following the correct information for the applicable school year.

#### Current 2020-21 School Year

The CSDE is in the process of approving the annual HFC Statements for the **current 2020-21 school year**. Beginning this week, all HFC public schools will receive an e-mail from the CSDE regarding the approval status of their HFC Statement. Please note that any CSDE requests for additional information apply to the **current year's (2020-21) HFC Statement** (which was submitted to the CSDE by July 1, 2020, last year); and **not** to the new HFC Statement for next school year (2021-22), which is due July 1, 2021

#### Planning for School Year 2021-22

[Section 10-215f](#) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) requires that each local board of education or governing authority for all Connecticut public school districts participating in the NSLP must take action (i.e., vote) annually to certify whether all food items sold to students separately from reimbursable meals will or will not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards (CNS). The CSDE will soon release the annual memorandum that details the process for submitting the HFC Statement for school year 2021-22. In the meantime, all public school districts should **proceed now to schedule their board of education/school governing authority meeting** for the HFC votes **prior to June 30, 2021**, so that the HFC Statement and meeting minutes can be submitted to the CSDE by the **July 1, 2021**, deadline. **All NSLP public schools must vote on 1) HFC participation; and 2) food exemptions.** In addition, if the board of education chooses to allow beverage exemptions under the beverage requirements of C.G.S. Section 10-221q, the minutes should also reflect this vote.

To comply with the HFC requirements, districts must include the **correct language** in their board motions. Please see below for the two required motions for HFC. For questions, please e-mail Susan Fiore at [susan.fiore@ct.gov](mailto:susan.fiore@ct.gov).

#### Planning for School Year 2021-22

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In the meantime, all public school districts should **proceed now to schedule their board of education/school governing authority meeting** for the HFC votes **prior to June 30, 2021**, so that the HFC Statement and meeting minutes can be submitted to the CSDE by the **July 1, 2021**, deadline. **All NSLP public schools must vote on 1) HFC participation; and 2) food exemptions.** In addition, if the board of education chooses to allow beverage exemptions under the beverage requirements of C.G.S. Section 10-221q, the minutes should also reflect this vote.

To comply with the HFC requirements, districts must include the correct language in their board motions. Please see below for the two required motions for HFC and the motion language if the district chooses to allow beverage exemptions. For questions, please e-mail Susan Fiore at [susan.fiore@ct.gov](mailto:susan.fiore@ct.gov).

### Two Required Motions for HFC

**The district's HFC vote must address the two motions below.** Maintain a copy of the **meeting minutes** indicating the results of the two HFC votes. The authorized signer will upload this information to the CSDE's CNP System later this spring when the CSDE notifies districts that the online HFC application module is available.

1. **Vote for healthy food option:** The board of education or governing authority for each public school that participates in the NSLP must vote "yes" or "no" on whether to implement the healthy food option of C.G.S. Section 10-215f, i.e., follow the CNS for all foods sold to students separately from reimbursable meals. The board motion and board-approved meeting minutes must include the following specific criteria for the healthy food option required by C.G.S. Section 10-215f:

**Motion language for healthy food option:** Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the board of education or governing authority certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

2. **Vote for food exemptions:** If the board of education or governing authority votes "yes" for the healthy food option, the board of education or governing authority must also vote on whether to allow food exemptions. (**Note:** If the board of education or governing authority votes "no" for the healthy food option, a vote on whether to allow food exemptions is **not** required.) The board motion and board-approved meeting

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minutes must include the following specific criteria for the food exemptions required by C.G.S. Section 10-215f:

**Motion language for food exemptions:** The board of education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held.

### Information on Beverages

The beverage requirements of C.G.S. [Section 10-221q](#) apply to **all public schools**, regardless of whether the district certifies for the healthy food option of HFC under C.G.S. Section 10-215f. Additional information on the beverage requirements is available on the CSDE’s [Beverage Requirements](#) webpage.

**Vote for beverage exemptions:** Beverage exemptions under C.G.S. Section 10-221q are **not** part of the annual HFC Statement, which applies only to food sales. If a public school district chooses to allow beverage exemptions, the CSDE recommends that the board of education or governing authority conducts the vote on beverage exemptions at the **same time** as the HFC votes. If the district does not have a beverage exemption in place, the district’s schools can **never** sell noncompliant beverages to students. The board motion and board-approved meeting minutes must include the following specific criteria for beverage exemptions required by C.G.S. Section 10-221q:

**Motion language for beverage exemptions:** The board of education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting or extracurricular activity. The “school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held, and must be the same place as the beverage sales.

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### Option to combine food and beverage exemptions

Instead of two separate food and beverage motions, the district may choose to combine food and beverage exemptions in one motion by using the language below.

**Motion language for combined food and beverage exemptions:** The board of education or governing authority will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held.

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### Updated Guidance: Using ESSER I & II Funds for Revenue Loss Related to Food Service

The CSDE sent the communication below to superintendents on February 25, 2021.

Many districts have continued to raise concerns about deficits in their food service programs related to increased food and labor costs, decreased revenue due to decreases in reimbursable meal counts and a lack of catering and a la carte sales. The Department reached out again on districts’ behalf to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) to clarify what, if any, flexibility districts might have to utilize ESSER I and II funds to support their food service programs beyond our original guidance.

Based on USDE’s response we can provide the following updated guidance. Districts must first use any available federal funds they receive for the specific purpose of providing food services. If additional funds are necessary, or federal funding with the specific purpose of providing food services to students is not available, and the need is related to the “prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus” purpose of the CARES Act and CRRSA Act as well as being “reasonable and necessary” then using ESSER funds may be allowable to assist in covering outstanding costs related to the provision of meals. If you have any further questions, please email [kathy.demsey@ct.gov](mailto:kathy.demsey@ct.gov).

### **Resource Roundup: Meal Counting and Claiming for School Nutrition Programs**

This week's Resource Roundup highlights information to assist sponsors with meeting the USDA's requirements for meal counting and claiming for the school nutrition programs, and reviews the CSDE's resource, [Overview of Meal Counting and Claiming Process](#). This document provides an overview of the steps, timeframe, and resources for meeting USDA's the meal counting and claiming requirements for school nutrition programs.

Join us for tomorrow's Table Talk (March 4, 2021, from 2:00-3:00 p.m.) as we help you navigate the CSDE's [Meal Counting and Claiming for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and resources. Registration for Table Talk is available at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1181137584459494413>. To submit questions in advance, visit [https://sdect.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_ezIN3YJJqjkPGND](https://sdect.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ezIN3YJJqjkPGND).

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [School Lunch Tray Table Talk](#) webpage, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Training/TableTalk/SLT\\_03-03\\_2021.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Training/TableTalk/SLT_03-03_2021.pdf).

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1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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