

The School Lunch Tray: May 19, 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.

- Reminder: School Wellness Policy Triennial Assessments due June 30, 2021
- End Hunger Connecticut! Summer Meals Outreach Material Order Form for Summer 2021
- Dedication, innovation, and collaboration for school meals in Connecticut: A mixed-methods analysis of school meals in Connecticut during COVID-19
- Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s Emergency Broadband Benefit Program
- Resource Roundup: Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Milk in School Nutrition Programs

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



Reminder: School Wellness Policy Triennial Assessments due June 30, 2021

Each local educational agency (LEA) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) must complete the first assessment of their local school wellness policy (LSWP) by **June 30, 2021**. For detailed guidance, visit the [Local School Wellness Policy Triennial Assessments](#) section of the CSDE's School Wellness Policies webpage.

Do you need help completing your assessment? The UConn Rudd Center can:

- help you score your written wellness policy;
- help you identify the people you need to interview;
- help you with the process of connecting your policies with practices;

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- help you identify what you need to include in the public-facing report you will post on your website; and
- provide feedback on your written report before you post it.

Please email Sarah.McKee@uconn.edu to set up an appointment.

End Hunger Connecticut! (EHC) Summer Meals Outreach Material Order Form for Summer 2021

EHC! wants to make sure every family in Connecticut knows that no-cost meals will continue to be available to their children throughout the summer. EHC! has a variety of no-cost promotional materials (such as fliers, business cards, post cards, and bookmarks) that help advertise the availability of Summer Meals Programs in your communities.

Sponsors can order these materials using [EHC!'s online order form](#). Materials must be picked up on June 3 or 4 between 12:30 p.m.-to 2:30 p.m. For more information, please contact EHC! at 860-518-9746.

Dedication, innovation, and collaboration for school meals in Connecticut: A mixed-methods analysis of school meals in Connecticut during COVID-19

The *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* (Volume 10, Issue 2/Winter 2020-2021) recently published the Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity's study on Connecticut school meals during COVID. The abstract is below and the article is available at <https://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/article/view/917/891>.

When school buildings across the U.S. closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many school districts mobilized to establish emergency school meal programs to operate outside the setting of school cafeterias. The aim of this convergent mixed-methods study is to (a) examine the structure and rates of participation in the spring 2020 meal programs in Connecticut, and (b) obtain insight about the challenges, strategies used, and lessons learned during this time by food service leaders. We obtained quantitative data from the Connecticut State Department of Education and district websites, and qualitative data from nine one-hour interviews with school food service leaders. Although the National School Lunch Program provides meals at standard price, reduced-price, or no cost based on student household income, all emergency meals during spring 2020 were provided at no cost following the school closures resulting from the COVID-19 public health emergency declaration. The average number of meals distributed from March to May 2020 was significantly lower than the overall participation rates (i.e., paid, free, and reduced-price meals combined) prior to COVID-19. However, participation rates in April and May 2020 approached those of free and reduced-price meal participation a year earlier. Four key action themes emerged from the interviews: (1) tailor the program to community needs and resources; (2) identify strategies to facilitate participation; (3) develop partnerships to coordinate school, municipal, and community efforts; and (4) establish programs that encourage resiliency. The interviewees also saw this event as an opportunity to improve

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the perception of school meals. Innovations developed during the spring 2020 school building closures provide a road map for best practices for the 2020–2021 school year and beyond.

Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) Emergency Broadband Benefit Program

The FCC recently launched the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, a new temporary benefit where low-income households can receive up to \$50 per month (up to \$75 per month if on tribal lands) credited towards broadband services. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has been providing technical assistance because people can qualify through participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or free and reduced school lunch. Information on the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program is available at <https://getemergencybroadband.org//>.

This program should not require anything from states administering the school nutrition programs. SNAP households should have correspondence they can use to prove enrollment and the Department of Education has provided schools with a form for families to show eligibility via the NSLP. However, some people might reach out to SNAP offices or the school lunch program with questions about the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program or the documentation they can use to apply.

Resource Roundup: Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced-price Meals and Milk in School Nutrition Programs

This week’s Resource Roundup highlights the USDA’s [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#). This publication provides comprehensive guidance on the federal requirements, policies, and procedures for establishing eligibility in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). It is intended to help local educational agencies (LEAs) accurately determine, certify, and verify children’s eligibility for free and reduced price school meals and free milk. It also provides important information regarding confidentiality and the disclosure of a child’s eligibility information.

Join us for tomorrow’s **Table Talk** (May 19, 2021, from 2:00-3:00 p.m.) as we review the *Eligibility Manual for School Meals* regarding the areas of confidentiality and disclosure. **Note:** Tomorrow’s Table Talk will also highlight some relevant items from last week’s School Lunch Tray (May 12, 2021).

If you registered for the April Table Talk webinars you will automatically be registered for the May Table Talk webinars. Registration for the May Table Talk series is available at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7940814127249762576>. To submit questions in advance, visit https://sdect.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ezIN3YJJqjkPGND.



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_05_19_2021.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;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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