

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: January 8, 2021

**Presenters:** Caroline Cooke, Monica Pacheco, Shannon Yearwood, Teri Dandeneau, Fionnuala Brown, Terese Maineri

0:04

Hi everybody. Thank you so much for joining us for our very first School Lunch Tray Table Talk. We think this is going to be a great initiative, as, you know, every single Wednesday, we send you the latest and greatest in Child Nutrition Program information. Its information you need to know to how to successfully operate your program.

0:24

I should probably back up and introduce myself. I'm Shannon Yearwood, the Education Manager of the Child Nutrition Programs at the Department of Education.

0:31

I'm so honored to be here with my fabulous team, so I'm going to call on them, and they're going to wave their hand in case you haven't met them before, so you know exactly who they are.

0:42

I'm going to start with Teri Dandeneau, who, many of you know, she works with school nutrition, has been helping with Seamless Summer Option, Community Eligibility, you name it, Direct Certification, she's in it.

0:53

Then we have to know that Fionnuala Brown, who's going to be leading our efforts on the Table Talk today. And she is also School Nutrition, Seamless Summer Option.

1:02

And many, many, many other things. So we have Susan Alston to round our School Nutrition and Seamless Summer Option team though you, and many of you know and has been with the department for a while.

1:14

And she also, like, all of our staff does many things outside of what I'm naming, Caroline Cooke, who is on our Summer Food Service Program Team, and Terese Maineri, who is also on our Summer Food Service Program Team. You guys have met with them, you've done a lot. Terese also works with special milk program sponsors.

1:33

And we have Monica Pacheco, who many of you just got off the Snacks Focus Friday session with her and our colleague, Allison, and they work on food distribution. Monica also works, on Farm to School and helps with procurement reviews.

1:47

So, I am so pleased to kick off this initiative. We're gonna keep it to a half an hour, so what we're gonna do is, every Friday for the week, for the month of January, we're gonna go through the topics

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that were included in the Wednesday, the School Lunch Tray, and talk you through them, because we know this is a very difficult time, and we send you a lot of information. And hopefully, this will be a good format for you to just get exactly what you need out of that publication.

2:12

So certainly type questions into the box as we go, and with that, I hand it off to you Fionnuala.

2:21

Speaker 2 – Okay, so great, thank you, Shannon, and hello, good morning everyone, um, so I am just going to pull off the school lunch tray that went out this week, and we are just going to walk through that, as Shannon said.

2:36

So here, can you all see my um screen?

2:59

All - Yes, thank you.

3:01

Speaker 2 - Okay, thank you.

3:03

So, um, know, Monica spoke about this. I know many of you were just on the USDA presentation. You're getting a lot of information, and with this um School Lunch Tray, busy week, at least, at the very least, you need to take a look at what we send out on Wednesday's.

3:21

So, as we, just start, we start off the School Lunch Tray with all of the items that are included in the School Lunch Tray, and the first item we have here is kicking off and all of the information about the Table Talk.

3:37

And as Shannon mentioned, this week, it is 10:30 to 11, and it might even go quicker than that, or, not sure, but we will not go over and then after that, it's going to be nine o'clock for the next three Fridays and the link there.

3:56

The next thing in the school lunch training that was sent out this Wednesday was information about the webinar, which has already passed, and so I will move along.

4:09

And then we have an update about USDA Foods, Monica and Allison spoke extensively about this, but, do today a request to donate your USDA Foods. You can contact Monica and Allison regarding that. Next up we have the Financial Report.

4:31

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Now, this one out on Wednesday, I'm already getting a lot of inquiries around this, so this is submitted annually and we initially asked for um this to be submitted as part of the online agreement back in August and September. It's being sent down the School Lunch Tray now because um many sponsors have not submitted that. So that's why you'll see now, for those that unfortunately weren't able to get to it and submitted, the new due date is January 31st.

5:04

This financial report, too. So just as a little bit of background on, is giving us a snapshot of last year's financial information. And as the State Agency will require to monitor that your net cash resources on your ending cash balance that you're not carrying over more than three months of your operating costs. So there are instructions there um, this is done in the CNP online system. If you are not the person who is responsible for completing this financial report, if you can check with the person in your district, at your agency that does that, to make sure that that is completed.

5:49

Again, this is for last school year, so, this is for, the data is for the 19-20, and then it's submitted now, so we need you to check that.

6:02

If you have completed it, there are not any new instruction actions that are being sent out. We just pulled those instructions out of the online agreement instructions and made them a standalone. That's why you will see that there dated January 20-21.

6:17

But if you have already submitted it, you're good to go and you should see the, um, reports should be in a pending approval or an approval status. If you have any specific questions, you do need to look at the instructions, it goes into detail what each line item is asking for. And, beyond that, you can contact me, my e-mails here, my phone number, you can reach out if you're new to completing this report.

6:46

If, last year was a different year, if you have some specific questions about how to report certain items. But this needs to be completed, it is required. So, please um check that you have either done it in the fall, and it's in the pending approval or approval status. And if not, this needs to begin by January 31st.

7:11

So, that's the financial report, um, this is a, in the online system, where you would click in for that, just as a little snip.

7:26

Alright, the next item on, oops, the next item, or on the School Lunch Tray, is a reminder. This went out a few weeks ago. But we thought, reach, send another reminder, and then to be able to talk a little more about it.

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7:43

At today's Table Talk, so, with the changes in meal distribution, we, we understand that many schools are going, full, have gone full remote, coming back to in person, um, implementing hybrid, again, so many different fluctuations in your learning models, which would impact your meal distribution.

8:07

So we are reminding you that you do need to reach out to your school nutrition consultant.

8:13

So for the Summer Food service program, that would either be Caroline or Terese, and then, for the seamless summer options and the National School Lunch Program would be Teri, Susan and myself. Reach out and make sure that, if you have any specific questions, and then also that you're on the online system, is reflective of any changes that you may have implemented or are planning to implement.

8:41

So, for example, if the beginning of the year, we've had to update the online system to reflect on different status of the school, it may be closed enrolled or an open site, this may have changed because of your learning models changing and then going full remote learning.

9:01

So, if that's the case, we may need to make an update to the online system.

9:06

Um, also, a big area, and what we're seeing a lot now, because we have, certainly um, more districts are understanding that it is allowable and that is a way to increase participation.

9:18

We have many sponsors, many school districts offering on Saturday and Sunday meals. So Saturday and Sunday meals would be a change in your online agreement, and certainly your distribution that you would need approval for, um, once you contact us, we will be asking you a series of questions that we're not able to obtain.

9:42

In the online system, we're going to want to know information as far as your menu. What, if all the children will have access to Saturday and Sunday meals were type of instructions you're sending out regarding keeping for the families, um for food preparation. So, there are some more details, a little bit more documentation, not extensive, just a few questions that need to be answered around serving Saturday and Sunday meals. And with that, will give you instructions on updating the online system. So, again, many of you have already done this. And you've already gone through the process with notifying our office.

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10:24

Um, and you may be all set, but for those who are looking to maybe implement Saturday and Sunday meals, um, you do need to reach out to the county consultant who supports you to make sure everything is in order for that. And we're here to provide technical assistance, right? So, these questions are allowing us to see if there's an area we can assist with, not only to make sure your online system is updated, but, then, also to ensure the other regulations are being followed.

10:57

Um, and we are seeing some, obviously more SFSP sponsors, but some SSO sponsors that are looking to have community sites under their sponsorship. And this too, would require you to reach out to your county consultant. Because, again, in addition to the online system, being updated and approved on, to serve and reimburse those meals, you need, we need some other information, you know, regarding community site coming on as a distribution site.

11:27

What staff will be there? Are they trained? What sort of equipment is there? So we just need to make sure all the regulations are being met.

11:36

And um again, this is just a reminder to reach out, and it doesn't hurt to reach out to your county consultant. If you're not if you're not sure, but certainly if you've already have these conversations, and received and gone through this process, you are all set.

11:52

We did get, we did have a question that came in from a sponsor, and it's kind of around this, so I'm just going to mention it, very directly operating days.

12:04

So under this seamless summer option, as I mentioned, if you are, there is a section under the site application where you list out the number of operating days each month. And for many sponsors, Monday through Friday, within a week, that would be five operating days.

12:26

If you are looking then and approve to serve Saturday and Sunday meals that we would go up to a seven operating days.

12:36

So, and then that obviously gets calculated to see how many operating days in that month, so that was a question that came up or came in, rather, before today's school lunch tray. So I just wanted to mention that.

12:51

And it is a good reminder, that, you know, the online system needs to be updated to and approved, because then that's tied into your claim, and you'll be able to claim those meals for those additional operating days and Saturday and Sunday. I've received a few calls over this past week for sponsors

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who had some changes in their operating days and did not update the online system. So, we're able to rectify that after I ask some additional questions.

13:24

The regulations are being followed, so again, um, please be sure of that any changes that you've reached out to your consultant and ensure that the online system is updated.

13:41

In the next few weeks, we will be sending out very specific guidance to opt in in the online system with Sites Specific information around the USDA waivers.

13:55

So, we, as a state agency, that will be a good time for us to ensure that we have captured all of the information necessary.

14:05

But for right now, again, we will need you to reach out to our office to ensure that those changes are captured in the online system, and that you have, you're following all of the regulations, okay.

14:22

So, so with those, um, two areas were operational updates, reminders and then as we go through the School Lunch Tray, we just wanted to give the information about the School Nutrition Association of Connecticut's Virtual Conference, which is next Thursday, January 14th, from 1 to 4. And you have the agenda listed down here, a link on how to register, the Department of Education, John Frassinelli, Shannon, and the team will be giving an update on.

15:00

So if you have not registered for that, we encourage you to register for that, which is again next Thursday.

15:10

Then, as part of the School lunch tray we send out information, national updates, so the release of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans came out December 29th, and there are a number of links here for you to go and take a look at that.

15:30

And, with that, of the, My Plate website and resources were updated. So, that is an excellent opportunity, if you're looking for some nutrition education material, and certainly, the, the My Plate translates and prep packages the principles of the Dietary Guidelines. So, it makes it a lot easier messaging for families, for students. So, you can go check out what's available for you there.

16:02

And then another update we have is, some of you may be utilizing the USDA Professional Standards tracking tool, and so there has been an enhancement to that and update with that, so for those of you who are utilizing that, or maybe you're not utilizing it, but you want to take a look at what's available. There is an enhanced feature here, and the link is there.

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16:34

And then I think, lastly, we just have some information about feeding toddlers'.

16:42

So some of you, very few, and again, we like to make sure all of the information is sent out in the School Lunch Tray, it may or may not be applicable to you.

16:52

We do have some of our sponsors that feed our preschoolers and some, maybe young children as well, with some alternate programs in place at some of our high schools. So this is just information to pass along for its nutrition education, healthy practices, and feeding toddlers.

17:14

And, um, and I believe that's it. So that's what we had in this week's School Lunch tray.

17:26

And I am back to see, look to see if we have any questions that have come in.

17:40

While I was giving that, started off quick, I slow down then. And again, hopefully, this is helpful to people. We know that it's a lot of information that comes out, so you might hear some further information as we kind of talk through it. That may help you kind of break it down and understand where we're getting at with the information we're sending out in the School Lunch Tray.

18:07

Definitely. We do have, we do have one question so far. And I would just want to encourage folks, this is a great time to, to submit any questions.

18:16

Really great if it relates to school lunch tray. If it doesn't submit your question anyway. If we're not able to answer it now, we'll certainly take it under consideration and be able to get back to you.

18:26

Speaker 1 - So the first question Fionnuala, is, if we make a change in the Online System and submit the changes, should we notify our consultant that an approval is required?

18:37

Speaker 2 - That's a great question, and it is, it is best practice to reach out to the consultant. As I said, these specific things that we're reminding you about would require some further information that you would need to submit that is currently not gathered and obtained through the online system. So specifically, talking about community sites and changing, increasing operating days adding on Saturdays and Sundays, distribution, you should reach out directly to your county consultant because we're going to ask you some further information that will need to ensure that regulations are being met.

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19:18

Traditionally, um we get an e-mail that comes from the online system.

19:24

If you have made the update and submitted it, we frequently run into sponsors, who may make a change in the online system, but forget to then submit that, so we are not notified, and that is just, kind of there, in a holding pattern, and then at some point, you know, we go through the online system, and kinda look to see what's going on. If a sponsor has made a change, and we may reach out to you and say you know you haven't submitted this.

19:51

Is this something on submit, so, it's always on best practice, and it's recommended to copy or notify your county consultant if you've made any change on the online system.

20:02

And, with that, I will just say one other thing also: We have some applications that are going into the permanent agreement mailbox on the home delivery. If you're looking to implement home delivery, you need pre-approval for that on the meal pattern flexibilities. And we would encourage you to copy your county consultant on those e-mails as well so we can make sure we are aware of it.

20:30

Just like you, were crazy and trying to keep on top of everything. So it's certainly as a benefit to do that.

20:39

Speaker 1 - So this next question, I may be able to field if you, if you want me to. So the next question is, has the Seamless Summer Option waiver to feed all students at no charge beneficially extended through September 30th, 20-21, with the latest stimulus bill that was signed a few weeks ago?

20:56

Would you like me to take that one?

20:58

Speaker 2 - Sure.

21:00

Speaker 1 - So we have not received any indication from USDA about how they'll be implementing the items that were contained in the stimulus bill.

21:09

There were some provisions that do impact the Child Nutrition Programs, but we, we're looking at those, we're reviewing them.



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21:17

We are speaking with the north-east Regional Office, Nutrition Services at USDA, and awaiting guidance. So as soon as we have that, we will turn it around and get it out to you as soon as possible.

21:30

Great. If there's any more questions, certainly submit them.

21:33

Otherwise, we will give it probably another minute or two, and then maybe give you a few minutes back or maybe there'll be last and last minute questions rushing in.

21:42

Um, I do want to give a huge shout out to Susan Fiore on our team who does an amazing job with pulling the school lunch tray together and has also inspired for those of you who participate in the Child Adult Care Food Program, there is now a weekly update for that program as well for relevant information as well on our team.

22:04

As well as Susan Boyle on our team, who is really integral to helping to pull that together as well.

22:07

So certainly keep your eye out, make sure that you and your friends are signed up for the Listserv, so that they have all the information they need, as well.

22:15

But the, the other thing I want to mention is that our website on the, especially the COVID-19 page, and on our program resources, it's constantly being updated.

22:26

If you have, if you have any ideas for how we can make that information as user friendly as possible, as easy to find as possible, certainly let us know. We're very open to your ideas, though, the whole idea behind program resources, to make it as accessible and usable and helpful to you as possible. But again, here's a shout out to Susan Fiore who is the fastest typer I've ever met, potentially has things posted before I've even seen them. So I certainly, check out those pages. She is constantly updating them, and making them responsive to requests.

23:00

So, at that, I'm not seeing any other questions come through.

23:04

But, as Fionnuala mentioned, this is our first in a series, and I'll kick it off to you if you want to wrap it up, then, I'll be quiet.

23:10

So thank you all for joining us for our first Table Talk.

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23:16

Speaker 2 - Yeah, that's it. I just wanted to say thank you, You know, the entire team, if you have any questions that come up, please feel free to reach out to us, you know, call, e-mail. We are, we are here to support your operations to support you. And, you know, every question is a good question.

23:35

So we're hoping that these Table Talks will help maybe decrease those questions that come individually, but we're not trying to say, don't, don't ask the question, okay, So, this is just another forum, but if you're not comfortable asking during this forum or beforehand, you can reach out directly to us. Thank you.

23:59

Thank you.

24:00

Everybody have a wonderful day, and we'll see you at next week's Table Talk.

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