

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: February 4, 2021

Presenters: Shannon Yearwood, Fionnuala Brown, Susan Alston, Susan Fiore, Monica Pacheco, Michelle Rosado (Hostess)

0:04

Hi, welcome to the School Lunch Tray Table Talk hosted by the Connecticut State Department of Education's Child Nutrition Unit.

0:11

I'm Shannon Yearwood, I am the Education Manager, for the Child Nutrition Programs.

0:16

And I am pleased to be joined by my colleague Susan Fiore and Fionnuala Brown, who will be working with us to walk through, walk you through a deeper dive into this week's school lunch tray.

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We know it contains a lot of information, very timely.

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So we want to make sure that you really are able to make the best use of it, and so we're using this format to be able to take that deeper dive.

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Additionally, we have added resource round up for this time.

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So, we're going to be taking, again, a deep dive into one of our resources that will help you make sure that you're staying true to all of the basics of these programs.

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So, before I hand it off to my team, I'm going to just give you a quick update that was not included in the School Lunch Tray, but you should have received a communication e-mail this past Tuesday, February 2nd.

1:02

Um as you know, many of you have been waiting for the state's Severe Needs School Breakfast Program Grant payment, and also, many of you are eligible for the Healthy Foods Certification and have been waiting word on how that's going to be handled this year.

1:16

So, as a lot of you know, those are state statutes and they are very, very specific language to them.

1:22

So, with the flexibilities that we are able to authorize through allowing um operations of USDA programs that don't typically operate during the school year, so the Summer Food Service program, the Seamless Summer Option, um, we were unable to just move forward with those grant payments.

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As we typically would, since very few of you out there are operating the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, the majority of you have selected to opt into operating the Seamless Summer Option, or Summer Food Service program.

1:53

So, we worked with the governor's Office to issue Executive Order Nine K Nutrition Flexibilities, which allowed our commissioner to interpret the intent of the statutes, and allow us to be able to send that funding to you, as you would typically need it. We just needed to make sure we fall within the rules of that.

2:12

So, the state's Severe needs school breakfast payments have gone out, they're right around \$2,715, and change.

2:21

So, if you are, if you are wondering if you have received that, and that is per eligible sites, so the eligibility is a little complex. If you have questions about that and, and whether which schools of yours qualify, certainly reach out to your consultant and speak with them about it.

2:36

Um, but if you are looking for whether your district has received those payments or not, look under the Grants Payment Report on our website and you might need to use the Internet Explorer browser to do that.

2:48

So sometimes our, our technology really prefer that IE platform.

2:55

Again, if you have any troubles with that, reach out, but that e-mail, you should have received it on February 2nd, so if you missed it, that's the date you're looking for.

3:02

Then it's for Healthy Food Certification, we were able to greatly modify the approval process this year.

3:07

So um, for those of you waiting for words, Susan Fiore, who has been tremendously busy making sure we have all of these resources up to date and ready to go with all of these different flexibilities she's also the person who is behind approving those applications for you.

3:21

So she is, now has the go ahead to be able to move forward with approving those. You have already submitted what you need to, we won't be asking you for additional documentation, we may need some clarification on what you've submitted.

3:33

Um, but because of the unprecedented timing this year, please know that we will be also sending out the application for next year's healthy Food certification. We typically send those out in January. Um, we want to get these this round of the 20-21 payments out to those applications approved.

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3:52

And as soon as we do that, we're going to turn it around and send out that application. So keep in mind, that's going to be for the upcoming year.

3:58

So please keep your eyes out. There'll be a lot more information on that, with that, I just want to thank my team who has furiously working 24-7 to make sure that we're able to support you.

4:10

There's been an administration change at the federal level, which has shifted some of our landscape, too. So we're also working to make sure that you have the latest and greatest information.

4:18

Thank you for joining our School Lunch Tray Table Talk. I've taken up way too much time and, typically, pretty short on these introductions.

4:24

But I want to go ahead and hand it off to Fionnuala and Susan to go through the great resources and information we have for you today. So, thank you so much, and Happy Friday Eve. We know it's not Friday yet, but it almost is, Fionnuala.

4:41

Speaker 2 - Yes, thank you, Shannon. Good morning everyone. We have a lot on the in the School Lunch tray this week and with our new resource roundup. We're just going to jump right in. So the first topic, Connecticut Department of Public Health Guidance for School Nutrition Programs. We're actually have Susan Alston that's going to uncover that. She is the expert in this area in our, on our team.

5:07

So, Susan, good morning. Speaker 3 – Hi, Good Morning, so for the past few weeks have been talking about food safety and importance of communicating that to your families as part of the alternate distribution methods that may be have, you know, in your district right now. So this week we're just going to highlight two resources that were issued by DPH in the Fall. In case you hadn't seen them, they are now available on our both our COVID-19 webpage and the Food Safety page. And the first one is a circular letter that was sent out to the Department of the local health departments from DPH.

5:42

And what this did was kind of give the health inspectors and the local health departments with guidance that they can use as they were reviewing your plan, if you as a district, reached out to them.

5:54

So, as you're looking to maybe beef up your plans or change your plans with the changing times or the changing distribution methods. You may want to look at these things, kind of a good reminder of what you would want to be have included in your plan.

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6:09

And, then the second item there is an infographic for food service or food service directors, for providing a safe manner, providing food in a safe manner, and, this might be a good thing just to put up in your kitchens or somewhere just, so that gives a good nice visual reminder of food safety. As always, you know, if you have questions related, triggers your distribution, or what you're doing. You can always reach out to your local health departments. I know that they're willing to help you while they're busy. You know, they're the best ones to answer any questions that you might have, and that's it.

6:54

Speaker 2 - Thank you so much, Susan. I had a little bit of technical difficulty there. I think. I'm back up and running.

7:01

Speaker 1 - That's why I magically appeared guys, and I neglected to introduce our hostess, Michelle Rosado, thank you for your help with that. She's the person behind the webinar, thank you for your help in this.

7:16

Sorry, I thought I had a second while you're trying to get your screen share back up.

7:23

Speaker 2 - Thank you, thank you.

7:25

So thank you, Susan, for going over those on those two items, and, um, those are available so the next on the School Lunch Tray, we have information about free cloth masks. So what we have here is the Department of Education has masks available, we're encouraging you to work with your administration, before you place the order, to ensure that it's one order coming in per district or school, and the information is there.

7:57

And the due date is February 12th. Up next, we have an announcement regarding the Connecticut food bank and the food chair, that they have officially come together. So, this was effective January 30th, 2021. And certainly positive for children and families all across Connecticut for, for those two wonderful organizations to come together.

8:24

So, if you want any additional information, you can click into the website um, or that link there.

8:34

So, ah we also want to get the word out right for many different areas. So, this is announcing webinars for the National Center for Homeless Education, and so, youth experiencing homelessness um each district has a Homeless Liaison assigned to their districts. So, you may want to forward this information to the Homeless Liaison in your district.

9:03

I know that many Determining Officials work with their Homeless Liaison to make sure we're extending benefits correctly for those youth that are determined homeless.

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9:14

So, this is some good information we're getting out to our Homeless Liaisons, and, um, some more information there.

9:25

Alright, next, we have something very important, that went out in the School Lunch Tray, and that's the application for Meal Pattern Flexibility, in the Child Nutrition Programs, School year 20-21.

9:39

So, some of you may say, what? What is this? I thought this already went out and we did send out an application when USDA allowed this on several months ago, related to COVID. And what we have revised the application now to include another item. So, just a little background about, about the additional um option in there.

10:04

Application on August 21st, 2020, USDA released information about a decision that was made April 2020 by the U.S. District court, and that decision canceled the USDA 2018 final rule, which allowed flexibilities around milk, whole grain, and the sodium requirements.

10:29

So, basically, USDA recognized that by canceling that 2018 rule and reverting back to the requirement that all flavored milk must be fat free.

10:42

All grains must be whole grain rich and that the second sodium target needs to be met, that there's some school districts may have not be following that.

10:54

So, because of already ordering, because not being aware of this change, so, USDA is allowing um sponsors too, for the National School Lunch Program School Breakfast Program, the Seamless Summer Option, to apply to waive the requirements. So, it's really straightforward, once you click into the application, you're literally checking off, that you are applying to waive Those requirements, those three requirements. And certainly we strongly suggest that you, all of them, if you can, but we recognize that you may already have items in, not all your items, may not be whole grain rich regarding the sodium target. Also the, um, the flavored milk being fat free, because that was already potentially in practice, the prior year, you may have implemented some of those flexibilities.

11:49

So that's the first, or that's the big change with the Meal Pattern Flexibility, application, and then the second item is what was in effect.

12:04

Last then, last year, also is that you could request to change or to waive some items due to the COVID-19, so, you know, to still be able to support safe access to nutritious meals, but sometimes, there may need to be some variation with meeting the meal pattern. Even for a short period of time, you would need to apply for that, get approved, and maintain that documentation.

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12:32

So, in a, as a recap, this uh application is new and it has that additional item that you can apply for, um we will be receiving these applications via the CNP online system.

12:50

We are going to be sending out instructions early next week to all of our sponsors to update the online system regarding the USDA waivers.

13:02

For not just the district as a whole, but the specific information for the schools and sites. And so, as you are doing that, and making that update, you will be uploading this application into the online system. And some of you have already applied for a COVID related Meal Pattern Flexibility, and that has been approved, and that is fine. This would be any new applications coming in, and certainly any applications with that option one, uh would need to be uploaded into the system.

13:37

So, I recognize that this is a lot of information. We will be going over as part of the resource round up this week.

13:44

We will be on discussing meal patterns and also included with that would be the dietary specifications, so you can get a good handle of what the requirements are, especially around that target too for the sodium, and then you can determine and make a decision if you need to, in fact, submit this application, the Consultants are available, if you have questions.

14:10

So, again, that optional one is for the National School Lunch Program uh School Lunch Program School Breakfast and the Seamless Summer Option and it may affect CACFP um sponsors as well, but as you know, if you're operating SFSP, you are following ah separate meal pattern.

14:33

And Option two would be for all of the sponsors operating our Child Nutrition Programs, the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast, Seamless Summer Option, Summer Food Service, Program, and CACFP. It is available to you if you um, need to need to submit a waiver for that.

14:55

So, I think I've covered this um this section of the application for meal pattern flexibilities, again, you know who your Consultants are, feel free to reach out. If you have any specific questions, feel free to throw it in the chat here if I haven't covered some questions you might have about this application.

15:16

And I am going to turn it over to Susan Fiore, who is going to go into the next items here.

15:32

Speaker 4 - Thanks Fionnuala, do I have control? Speaker 2 - I believe you do, you're listed twice, so I think you do.

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15:41

Speaker 4 - Alright.

15:44

Speaker 1 - Do you want to take any questions quickly before we go on to Susan's section, or should we put some questions at the end? Speaker 4 - I'm sorry, sure. Speaker 1 No, no, no. No worries. It's alright, this is where, you know, it's Table Talk where I'm jumping in and throwing things are off track. So we are, right now, not seeing any questions in the question box, but certainly submit those as we go and we will handle those as we are able to. We are going to enable the hand raising feature right now so if you have any immediate questions, just raise your hand, we will unmute you, but if you are muted, you'll need to unmute yourself and you can certainly share your thoughts with us. We will also have an opportunity at the end when Susan Fiore is done with walking through with some of our resources in the meal pattern to be able to also enable that hand raising feature.

16:36

Speaker 4 - Sorry, people, I'm just trying to navigate my way to the.. Speaker 1 - I thought this might be a good segue to randomly reappear.

16:47

Alright, here we go, and let me bring that back down here. Alright, is my screen showing?

17:00

Speaker 1 - Yes. Speaker 4 – It is? Alright, fabulous.

17:06

Speaker 1 - And I'm not seeing any hands raised, or questions in the box, I'm not seeing any hands raised or questions, in the back, I think we can go ahead and move forward, but please submit those, and I know it can be hard to wait till the end. So certainly use that question box, and you can send those questions directly to us if you don't want to share them with everybody, and we will summarize those at the end and answer which ones were able to. So thank you so much. I'm gonna go off camera.

17:37

Speaker 4 - Thank you, well good morning everybody, and welcome to our first resource Roundup, where we're going to focus on the meal patterns, specifically the meal pattern for grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program. And, you know, when you think about the meal pattern, it's really the heart of the program. Everything you do is driven by the meal pattern when you think about menu planning and purchasing. Identifying reimbursable meals, meal counting, and claiming, purchasing. Complying with the USDA monitoring requirements, everything comes back to that meal pattern. So while we recognize that things are very crazy with all of the adjustments that you have to make around feeding meals for kids during this COVID time, we would encourage you to get back to basics, and really think about the meal pattern, because it does drive everything you do in your school nutrition program.

18:27

So with that, we're going to focus today on several resources that all correspond to the meal pattern for grades K-12, and I just going to go through several of these updates. We're going to talk about the updated meal patterns and just briefly, the two updates that were made were to

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include a sentence that had been omitted in the previous meal patterns, which was guidance on nuts and seeds.

18:52

Which are allowable at the lunch meal pattern, but cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. So for example, if you're serving two ounces of maybe an alternate to Grades 9 to 12, 1 else could be nuts and seeds and the other rounds has to come from another meat/meat alternate, alternate. And the other update to that meal pattern is the nondiscrimination statement, so we're going to jump into those meal patterns in a second.

19:17

But we're also going to look at the dietary specifications, some updated resources, including the menu planning checklist, excuse me, and some additional resources for you regarding the meal patterns.

19:28

So, I am going to go ahead and I'm going to jump right into the Meal Pattern webpage.

19:35

And I want to just take a little bit of time to navigate you through because I know we have a ton of resources, and sometimes it can seem overwhelming. In terms of how we find them. So hopefully today we'll help you find that information a little bit easier. So, when you jump right onto the page, you're going to see an overview. And, you know, just as a reminder, when we, when we talk about the meal patterns, we're really looking at what the requirements are for feeding kids in the National School Lunch Program. And, again, I'm just mentioning school, lunch program today, but obviously we've got breakfast and our other programs as well. So what is the meal pattern? It's basically the required amount of the food components and the minimum serving sizes that you must provide to children in order to receive reimbursement for meals. And these meal patterns, I'm sure you're pretty familiar with, by now they use a food based menu planning approach. They include three different grade, K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. There also is some flexibility for schools that do not fit into those grade groups, such as grades K-8.

20:39

And, in addition, they have some specific requirements regarding the Components and the Dietary Specification, so we're going to take a look at what those are.

20:48

To get to the meal patterns from our main webpage, you click on Documents and Forms, and that's going to bring you in right to the section that has the meal patterns, and you're going to see a little bit of guidance information up at the top of the page, regarding the meal pattern changes that occurred for this school year, as well as the Meal Pattern Waiver Option that Fionnuala just mentioned, and then below that, the actual meal patterns themselves.

21:14

So, I'm going to dive into the lunch meal pattern for all grades, I'm going to do the five day meal pattern, and of course, the seven day meal patterns are the same, except for the weekly requirements, which are more due to the fact that there's two additional days.

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21:30

So, if we're looking for the lunch meal patterns, we're just going to click on meal patterns here, and you're going to see what looks like a fairly complicated chart, but it's basically giving you two options for each of the different types of meal patterns. And on the left, you're going to see the regular meal pattern, and that's the meal pattern that's in place, as if there were no waivers and nothing's changed. We don't have COVID, uh the meal pattern that we've had in place for the last couple of years, that's on the left side. On the right side, is the meal pattern for the waiver, and these meal patterns can only be used if you've submitted uh and received a waiver from the CSDE to implement the meal pattern, and, again, that's the waiver that Fionnuala just mentioned this morning. So, when we take a look at the meal patterns, if we want to click into the five day lunch for all grades, that's the one on the left.

22:23

And, again, you've got the equivalent, one for the waiver on the right, and the difference between these two meal patterns is just three things.

22:31

So, for the waiver meal pattern, the waiver meal pattern allows flavored milk to be low fat, whereas, the regular meal pattern does not.

22:42

It also allows whole grain rich to be, to not be all whole grains, because the current meal pattern requires that all grains must be whole grain rich, and the third difference is the sodium requirement. So, in the meal pattern on the left, the sodium must be meeting the sodium target number two, the school year and then the one on the right, it's so the previous sodium target. So if we click in, this is going to look familiar to all of you.

23:17

Here's our meal pattern with our three gray groups, and one of the things that we highlighted in the School Lunch Tray, you know, you're all very familiar with the components.

23:26

You know, there's five components for the meal pattern, and they consist of minimum amounts of daily and weekly servings.

23:33

And for the meat/meat alternates and grains components, those weekly servings have minimums and maximums, and you probably remember that the minimum you have to meet. The maximums are not required, but they do help you keep your menus in line with the weekly dietary specifications. And that's the second piece down here that I wanted to call your attention to, and that we mentioned in the School Lunch Tray.

23:57

Because the meal pattern is not just the amounts of food that are served every day and every week, but it's also the weekly dietary specifications. And that's just a fancy way of saying nutrition standards. It's what requirements the menus have to meet on average, over the course of the week, and so you'll see there's requirements for calories, saturated fat, sodium, and trans fat, and, by the way, the trans fats net standard, there's a proposed rule to eliminate that effective next school year, and if that goes forward, then the trans fat standard would be removed.

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24:31

And the reason behind that is FDA has done some regulations in the recent years that eliminate trans fats from our food supply. And so as a result, it's a standard that really is not going to be needed anymore. So we'll see when that goes through, we'll certainly let you know. So, again, in a nutshell, the meal pattern is both of those things.

24:52

It's the components that we see here, and it is the dietary specifications that we see here.

25:00

So just as a brief overview of the meal pattern, many planning notes, and Fionnuala if you want to chime in here about any of the things that you typically see, I would really encourage you to use these many planning notes as a way to get more information for the meal pattern.

25:17

They're built into every meal pattern, they provide guidance on crediting foods, specific information on each of the components, and the types of requirements that are in place.

25:27

So, for example, you can see here under the footnote for Milk for School Year 20-21, the only types of milk that you can serve are unflavored low fat, flavored fat free, and flavored fat free, and, again, that would be as if you did not have the waiver in place to implement the alternative, which would be flavored low fat free milk.

25:47

So that's an example of one of the resources, and you can click in to get more information on any of these, if you haven't taken a look at our components page. If you click on any of the links in the meal pattern, it'll take you directly to the information on that particular component, gives you some background information, and also gives you additional resources and requirements, as well.

26:11

So, there's a ton of information on the back of that meal pattern that allows you really to do a deep dive into what the requirements are and some of the resources that are available to you.

26:23

Fionnuala, did you want to mention any of the specific compliance issues that you typically see regarding these components?

26:32

Speaker 2 - Sure. I can just mention a few. I will say what you said is true. You know, as when we go out to conduct Administrative Reviews, this is something that we have readily available, because certainly there are a number of resources and with the menu planning guide, it's so comprehensive. But only just how the meal pattern for K-12 and breaks apart. You know, all of the different grade groupings, and then to look then, specifically at each component, to, see at a glance of the minimum, the weekly and those little nuances that we have tried to bring to your attention throughout any trainings regarding meal pattern compliance. So, I use this, you know, using it.

27:18

Just as I said, when we go out and any questions that come in, this is what I have available to be able to refer to.

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27:25

Um what we're seeing is, what I'm seeing, we're seeing some, some menus come in and, and some challenges around meeting potentially, or menuing correctly, around breakfast, making sure that the one cup of fruit is, is menued and offered. So, we're seeing that, and, also regarding the arm, this is lunch, and then making sure for those that K-8, because many of our seamless summer option sponsors, for the remote learners, for open sites.

28:07

You do have the option to pick the predominant age grade grouping, which the majority of sponsors would be following the K-8 meal pattern for, for those open sites. And really making sure that you have the three quarters cup of vegetable that you are following the subgroup, the weekly subgroup requirements, and then that half cup of fruit. I think some of the confusion, or some of the challenges, is making sure sponsors may be making sure that the minimum, again, with Offer versus Serve is implemented, would be in the bag or the box, or in those packaging for the remote learners, or the children being served off site.

28:52

But, really, you need to be offering all of the items, so making sure that the full amount of the meal pattern requirements are met. So, those are just a few of the things, but, you know, all in all, I would say, that sponsors, Food Service Directors, you're doing a great job under these crazy circumstances with meeting the meal pattern. I'm seeing a lot of creative things come in.

29:18

We've just been providing support, as I said, kinda double checking and making sure those meal pattern compliance that they're in compliant with the meal pattern there.

29:31

Speaker 4 - Perfect, thanks Fionnuala.

29:34

So, just as a reminder, the meal pattern is intended at lunch to provide about one third of children's total daily calories and nutrients needs, that's how it's designed, and that's why there's specific amounts of each of the meal pattern components. You can always serve more than the minimum. The key thing is to keep in mind that if you're serving more consistently, that sometimes you might exceed the limits that are required for calories, and also for saturated fat and sodium. So that's something to keep in mind when you're looking at the types and amounts of foods that you're serving.

30:09

So in terms of diet that, the dietary specifications, let's just go back a minute, and I just want to give you a little more information as to where you can find guidance.

30:21

So, at the top of the page, remember, we clicked here to get into the lunch meal patterns, and if we want more information on the dietary specifications, we can just click right here on that link, and you're going to see a ton of information. There's some overview information around the dietary specification.

30:37

There's a lot of guidance in our Menu Planning Guide, and then USDA's Guide, as well The Menu Planner for School Meals, and there's also the guidance specific specified in the Final

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Rule, but you can find some additional resources on calories, unsaturated and trans fat, and also on sodium, so that information is there for you as well.

31:00

And just as a reminder, unless you're applying to implement the waiver for the meal pattern, the Dietary Specifications are still in effect, so that's something to keep in mind as you think about what you want to do with your meal patterns.

31:13

I'm just going to click back to the Lunch Tray for a minute. So we can look at some of those things that are highlighted in the dietary specifications.

31:24

There they are.

31:26

So we talked about, they're located at the bottom of the Meal Patterns, and again, that they apply to grades K-12. There are no dietary specifications for preschoolers or for the CACFP or the SFSP. So, this is just specifically for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

31:42

I mentioned the final proposed rule that would eliminate trans-fat as a dietary specification, and again, focusing on, if you're wanting to waive the sodium requirement, that's one of those three options in the meal pattern waiver. And, by the way, you can apply for either one or both of the options in that meal pattern waiver. So, depending on what you have and the specific needs for your district, if you need to apply for more than one waiver underneath that part, you may.

32:11

And then, again, we just talked about the resources.

32:14

So, a couple other things to help guide you through planning your meals for lunch for K-12, we have some menu planning checklists, and those were updated recently.

32:24

I'm just going to click into them, those are on our forms page.

32:28

And if you're not familiar with the forms page, in addition to listing the resources, it also lists the date they were updated. So this is our effort to try to keep you informed. So if you have a form and you're using it, and you're thinking, Is this the most recent one?

32:41

I'm not sure when you go to the website, you can quickly take a look, and you can see, in this case, that are many planning check lists were updated February 20-21. And if you haven't seen these before, use them, they're just a real simple tool.

32:55

It's a one pager that helps give you some guidelines for the things that you need to think about, including to make sure that your lunches comply with the meal pattern.

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33:02

So there's guidance on each of the components, and then there's some guidance around the dietary specifications as well.

33:14

And then lastly, they, I wanted to focus on another resource for you, which is at the end of this School Lunch Tray, we'll get there.

33:28

And that's our updated resource list for the school meal patterns. You know, again, we recognize that there's a ton of information out there, it's sometimes hard to find what you're looking for.

33:38

And so this is a really good place for you to go to find the information under each component, what you're looking for. So, I'm going to click right into this. This is the PDF.

33:50

And this resource list includes a section with some general program guidance, which are some links to some webpages for Child Nutrition Programs, and then some very specific guidance for each of the meal pattern topics.

34:02

So, for example, if you're looking for information on the fruits component, you can literally just click right there.

34:10

You should be able to click right there, will have to fix that, sometimes these bookmarks that worked well, here we go. And you'll find a list of resources, everything from crediting juices and smoothies to where the Food Buying Guide is located for the section on fruit, and information on portion guides, and USDA memos and other resources.

34:30

So, if you're looking for a specific resource related to the meal pattern and how to implement it, this is a really good place for you to go, because you'll be able to go through and just find exactly what you're looking for in one place and click on it to get to those resources.

34:45

And that, again, is located on our website. It's in a couple of different sections.

34:50

And it is, of course, accessible from program guidance, as is everything, that's your one stop shop, and where you should go first to try to find anything related to our school meal programs. So we can get there from program guidance.

35:05

And if you click on M for Menu Planning.

35:13

You're going to see the resources for the school meal patterns for good grades K to 12, and also, if we go to our, let's get there for a second, if we go to our, oops, one more, sorry, it brings me up

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at the top. Every time I click in and out of it. In our Related Resources section of our Meal Patterns webpage, you're going to find it here, as well.

35:55

Under Resources For Menu Planning, so that's a couple of different locations for you to get to that particular resource.

36:03

So that is it, in a nutshell. I think we're gonna open it up to questions, unless any of the rest of our team would like to chime in.

36:10

Hopefully, that gives you a little bit of an overview of where to find the resources that you need around the meal pattern, and, again, there's tons of them, so if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me, or any of you, the team, and we're happy to help you find what you're looking for.

36:25

Speaker 1 - Thank you so much, Susan, and Fionnuala, this is just really tremendous information. I have to say, that I learned so much, every time that I talk to our team, or hear them talk through some of this, and I know that it's confusing, because I also am and learning all the other meal patterns, um., just really, really appreciate the expertise of our team. So certainly reach out if there's any way that we can help you with that menuing. So, we do have a few questions in the question box. And, Michelle, if you can go ahead and enable the hand raising feature, that will give you a chance to get warmed up with pressing that hand raising feature.

36:58

And we'll go ahead and go through the questions that were submitted in the box to give you a chance to find where that is.

37:05

This is a question that's regarding the nuts and seeds requirement.

37:09

If a student takes a peanut butter and jelly with two tablespoons peanut butter, we can no longer offer a one ounce package of sunflower seeds. Is this because the fat content is too high?

37:24

Speaker 4 - I'm not sure that I understand the question. You certainly can offer two tablespoons of peanut butter as one ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternate and you can offer one ounce of nuts and seeds, if these is the other, so I'm not sure if that's the person is asking, or if there's something else.

37:45

Maybe there's some clarification they'd like to ask, but yes, you can do both.

37:49

You can offer one ounce of nuts and seeds and two tablespoons of peanut butter as the total two ounces of meat alternate that is allowable.

37:58

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Speaker 1 - Thank you, that's, I think that should help clarify that. I'm sorry, next question is, how should schools measure sodium levels of meals to assure they are in compliance?

38:10

Speaker 4 - Schools are not required to specifically measure their own sodium levels, certainly if you have a nutrient analysis program and you can do that, that's great. But the USDA requires the state agency, if a district has been identified as needing the nutrient analysis, as part of the administrative review. The state agency is the one that conducts a nutrient analysis. So, certainly it's, it's a little bit difficult. If you're not sure whether you're in compliance, again, I would check with some of those resources. There's a lot of tips on how to choose foods to lower sodium and some of the things you can do in terms of your menu. The big, the biggest thing you can do is, focus on your purchasing specifications and looking at what you bring in.

38:51

Because most of the sodium in our school meals, as well as in our diets, comes from foods that are purchased prepared. So, if you can look at what you're buying commercially, and specify some products that are lower in sodium, that's going to be your number one step to helping you keep those sodium levels low.

39:10

Speaker 1 - That's great, great tip. Thank you.

39:12

Speaker 2 - I'm going to just jump in.

39:14

Yeah, and I'm just going to add on, that is a great question and all of the resources, if you already mentioned, but if, if your district was up for an administrative review, how we evaluate or monitor would be their dietary specification on worksheet.

39:31

And so you answer a number of questions about purchasing, as Susan mentioned, practices in the lunchroom, preparing, operating.

39:41

So, it kind of, it's, it's what USDA has developed for state agencies, too, to see if, in fact, the state agency needs to conduct a nutrient analysis, because you have flagged as potentially on one of the areas in the dietary specifications not being met. So, it's not specifically, or solely sodium.

40:02

And it encompasses trans-fat, and looks at that, as well. So, but, that is a tool you could use, and that's available on our website, as well.

40:12

But I mean, Susan mentioned a number of other resources available, but I just wanted to, to mention that, too. But, and to re-iterate, you are not required to run a nutrient analysis.

40:24

If you have that software, and that's part of what you offer as a district to your families, or if it's a management company, and they offer that, that's great. But it would be the, it will be on the, on the state agency to conduct that. If during an Administrative Review, you flagged in one of those

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areas. That determined, yes, we need to now do a comprehensive look at your menu because there's an area that flag that those dietary specifications potentially not being met.

40:54

Speaker 1 - Great, thank you so much. So I'm going to do a quick plug before I move on to our next questions here, so we don't have any hands raised, but one of the things we really wanted to be able to do, and we heard from folks, is that you wanted to have some office hours with us to be able to ask questions. And you can certainly ask questions that may not pertain to the specific school lunch tray even though you can't see our whole team. We are, we are all on.

41:18

So if one of our, if Susan can't answer, perhaps one of our other team members can, and if we don't have the answers right now, we will certainly like it and get back to you.

41:29

There are some specific circumstances, or any questions that I might skip those for now, so that we can look into those very specifically, and reach out to you.

41:37

And I'm going to focus on answering some of these general questions.

41:41

So I see some more hands getting raised now. So, thanks so much, and I'm gonna, I'm gonna finish asking these last few questions in the question box.

41:50

Certainly submit them there, too, and we'll just keep doing both ways.

41:53

So, our next question is, do these changes also apply to preschool ages 3 and 4?

42:03

Speaker 4 - Which changes are we talking about? Does it specify?

42:07

Speaker 1 - It does not specify so, if the asker of that question we want to throw into the question box very specifically.

42:13

And I'm not sure if your thing about the vacated rules or what, but certainly clarify that, and we will get back, we'll circle back to that.

42:22

Speaker 4 - So, I can speak to the vacated rule.

42:25

So, in terms of the preschool meal pattern, these requirements are different, and this preschool meal pattern does not have the choice of working it at home, the cat always finds me. And preschool meal patterns do not have the dietary specifications. So, for example, the sodium requirement does not apply, and in addition, the requirement that all whole grains must be all grains must be whole grain rich does not apply. The preschool meal pattern requires at least one serving of whole grain rich grains per day.

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43:00

So, the guidance regarding the Meal pattern waiver is specific to K-12, and maybe that's what the question is referring to. The preschool meal patterns are different, and do not have to meet those specific requirements that were mentioned around that final rule.

43:20

And if the person has additional needs additional clarification, please, you know, send another question through the chat box.

43:26

Speaker 1 - That sounds great and, and, and now we've got the hand raising. So, that's also available.

43:32

So, our next question is, are there any new guidance or information on pre-K menu's? They can be a bit challenging.

43:42

Speaker 4 - Not specifically from our office, but the USDA has a ton of resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and as you're probably aware, these preschool meal patterns are the same as the CACFP.

43:56

So, if you are looking for information on menu planning for preschoolers, I would suggest that you visit our Preschool Meal Patterns section and you can get there by going to program guidance. If you click on P for Preschool and scroll down, you'll get to that page, and under the, I think it's, I think it's the resources Section of that page. There's a ton of links to resources around menu planning for preschoolers, including resources, like lowering sugar and increasing, whole grains, and there's sample menus and a bunch of other things. And if that doesn't do it for you, then feel free to reach out and I can put you in the direction of some other resources.

44:38

Speaker 1 - Great, thank you. Um, so the next question is any rule of thumb for creating venues for overlapping K-8 schools?

44:49

Speaker 4 - We have a lot of guidance in our menu planning guide for school nutrition programs, and I would refer you there, there is some specific guidance around the things that you can do to create those menus. And, again, if you need more details, feel free to reach out. Reach out to us and we can direct you to some more of our resources.

45:09

Speaker 1 - Alright, thank you. So, I'm gonna jump over to the hand, oh, go ahead Fionnuala.

45:15

Speaker 2 - Yeah, I just wanted to say that we actually have, um, Meal Patterns specific for K-8, so if, if you do have that overlap, and have those schools going to show you is right on our website that we had broken apart, obviously, the K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. But then we do have a guidance for K-8 schools.

45:35

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So, that is, it's right there on our website, and maybe on the person needs to be directed there, and as you said, you could reach out or go back to some of those links, We have that available, and the tool tips for doing that care concept.

45:52

So, I'm gonna break my own rule, and we do have, we have one more question in the question box, but I will, I'll field that one, but before we do that, I see that we have a hand raised from Sherry Staeb, and so, I want to make sure that she has an opportunity to ask your question. Speaker 5 - My apologies. Hi, Sherry

46:10

Speaker 5 - Hi, Good morning. I raised my hand, so I apologize, but we really appreciate the virtual high five, your giving our teams.

46:23

But I won't break my own rule, but certainly raise your hand if you'd like to add in a verbal wave. Now, we know that works. Thanks for being our tester Sherry.

46:32

That's it.

46:33

Next question is, do you have any information on the funding that might come available through the Child Nutrition Program, Emergency Operating costs, the memo also mentioned, and as dementia. Excuse me, the member mentioned NSLP and SPP, but with this include funding for SFSP as well.

46:50

So, great question. We have just received additional information from the USDA this week.

46:56

And, in fact, we have another training on that this afternoon.

47:00

So hopefully, we'll be able to get some additional information out to you soon, but there is addition, there is some recovery costs for decreased meal claims, basically, through the unanticipated school closures of last year as compared to this year.

47:16

So we're going to, we're working, there's some pretty complex formulas. We're working on the data. The state is working right now on an application to be able to proceed with this, with this opportunity. So that is something that we are currently working on and trying to get the information as soon as you have additional information. Some of the calculations are going to be pretty straightforward. Some of them are going to be pretty complex.

47:39

So, we are working on that.

47:41

But our state does plan to apply it, to be able to offer those funds out to operators, that's not going to create new funding, it's really to help offset some of the lost, anticipated revenue due to that impressive impacts of COVID-19.

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47:58

So, don't forget to raise your hand.

48:01

We submit your questions and I sound like an advertiser, but that's part of my job. So, I'm not seeing anything else in the question box, and I hope that that I know that wasn't a very specific answer about the funding. But, like I said, it's hot off the press so we are working on that very diligently.

48:21

Anybody else want to raise their hand? Again, that says, you can ask us anything. It doesn't have to be pertaining to the school entry that just went out. If we can't answer, would still love to hear from you.

48:34

And keep in mind, we are on, we did switch the times for this month to this this new time, 9 to 10 in the morning.

48:44

We know we will never find the perfect time for everybody, so certainly also let us know. If you have any ideas, any suggestions, for what might be a better time, we, we will probably move these on a monthly basis to try and accommodate as many folks as we can.

49:00

So in the meantime, we have a ton of resources for you and we're making School Lunch Tray.

49:06

We have a brand-new webpage available for that, has all of this great information in an easy to find way, not easy to say, but easy to find.

49:16

So we do have a question about USDA commodities, and I know we have our colleague Monica is listening, and so hopefully she's able to join us to help answer those, and if she's not, we'll get back to you. So, the question is, do you know when info on USDA commodity orders for next school year will be coming out to us?

49:37

Speaker 6 - I think I jumped in, so, great question, John, Thank you. Yes, we're working similar to everyone else behind the scenes.

49:44

Furiously getting everything ready, USDA was slightly delayed in some things that we needed to get ready. However, we're catching up pretty quickly. We are hopeful, I dare say it that we think the announcement will go out in the school lunch tray next week. So, we got almost all the behind the scenes work ready. You can't do anything until, we get all the DOD responses, which are due tomorrow, because that has to be entered and updated before we killed in the catalog for you guys.

50:11

But uh, we anticipate, in the next week, again, our goal is for next Wednesday School Lunch Tray to have that information go out and get things going.

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50:24

Speaker 1 - Thank you so much, Monica. John, I agree with your statement that you guys are the best.

50:30

They really are areas that our food distribution team has also been helping out our neighbors over in Massachusetts, and it's been great. We do a lot of regional partnerships around our USDA Foods to try and make sure that we can maximize the ability of those coming to you, so great, great teamwork.

50:51

Speaker 1 - And I'm not seeing any more questions in the question box. Certainly, if you want to just type in compliments, we are also open to that.

51:00

But if you have a question, I'm gonna give it just another minute or so to raise your hands, and it might be true to form.

51:07

And early if there's no other questions, that discouraging question. This is when the silence's became a little bit harder.

51:18

Alright, more compliments, I wasn't fishing, thank you so much.

51:28

See, this is the best I should just ask for compliments in the beginning. You guys are much more active, and ask them the questions.

51:36

Alright. Well, we know that we are available at any time. Certainly. Let us know. We do, we have quick, last minute, a hand raised here, so, that may have been a mistake. Alright, that hand went away pretty quick.

51:55

Alright, so, just, you know, No, no, we're available through e-mail. It's very helpful to us if you use the question: the ability to submit questions ahead of time using that, we send it out when we send out the registration link for this quote: Lunch tray table talk, and we were really, you know, just send them ahead of time so, we know what you want, and that helps that will help us craft the information. And the reason that we really focus on.

52:19

We do have one quick note about the Triennial Assessment.

52:23

So, it just happens to be on this, and she is leading the effort for us. So, if we receive notice that our Triennial Assessment was completed in June and I now receive the notice must I resubmit?

52:40

Hmm.

52:42

Speaker 2 - Hi. I'm sorry. I'm just trying to understand the question.

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52:46

So, if notice that the Triennial, I'm not sure who the notice would come from, but just some information about the Triennial Assessment. So that that was all districts were required to complete an assessment of their local school wellness policy. By June 30th, 2020 USDA, has pushed that off, and that's now currently required to be completed by June 30th, 2021. We are working with the on the Rudd Center and we sent out e-mails to about 54 Districts this week, notifying them of a webinar that is available in February. We have two available, they can sign up for one. And it's, it's an effort to, we've created some tools and some worksheets to assist sponsors with completing their Triennial Assessment.

53:41

So, the 54 districts are targeted, or because some of the work has been um, some of the steps have been accomplished, because they were due for an Administrative Review last year. We're not leaving anyone out.

53:56

There's going to be some webinars available in March for the rest of the districts. So, if you haven't received an e-mail about your inviting you to a webinar to help assist districts completing that to complete their training assessment, you'll get that next in the next few weeks.

54:15

And so, I'm just not sure you can reach out directly to me who ever asked this question because we would not have sent a notice that the Triennial Assessment was complete.

54:25

Now, if you are referring to as part of your Administrative Review, Donna Heins was completing um that section of the Administrative Review that, yes, you would have received notice that that is uh done, but that is not, um, that's not the Triennial Assessment, the Triennial Assessment is actually, needs to be conducted by the wellness committee on the Local Education Agency and it's a little more comprehensive but as I said, we've been working with the RUDD Center.

54:57

We're trying to streamline this give you really nice tools to walk you through the process, but it's more than just those elements that were reviewed as part of the Administrative Review.

55:10

Really quickly, I think we have a minute or are we over? It is, um, you are comparing your policy to a model policy, which we use the, well, step three now, as a model policy, or we encourage you to do that, and then you, beyond comparing your policy, looking to see that all of the elements are there are required.

55:32

You, then, are measuring implementation, and that's done through interviewing a few key stakeholders to see how the policy is actually, in fact, playing out.

55:46

And then beyond that, you do need to make on this evaluation of the triennial assessment public. So, we have nice, easy worksheets tools to kind of walk you through that whole process and it's not vague and it's not up in the air and you don't have to kind of figure out the path to that. And so, a lot of work has been done with partnership with The Rudd Center to do to help you through that. But now, I guess I'm clear on the question.

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56:14

You may have received an e-mail saying that your that local school wellness policy review as part of your administrative review was completed, but that is not your Triennial Assessment. Unfortunately, the training and assessment is another requirement from USDA, and we do recognize that these are unprecedented times and there are different practices that are occurring right now in school districts and schools.

56:39

And so this evaluation will really look at what normal practices prior to call it in what you will be looking to return to after, after things get back to the new normal. I guess we'll call it. So, so, yeah, if you've received information, I would strongly encourage you to attend one of those webinars in February to our webinars in because we will really help get you through to getting this done and completed and check off of this panel for the June 30th, 2021 deadline.

57:15

That was a lot of information. Sorry!

57:18

Speaker 1 - Great, great, spontaneous. And for those of you, you know, pre COVID, that we were able to do, a couple of local, couple Triennial Assessment and let us go on this policy trainings with the red center and those sold out quick. So we know these are popular, The Rudd Center does a tremendous job, really great partners, and so, you know, certainly, certainly make sure that you're available to attend those.

57:42

It's a really interesting tool that they're using, and they really help you help you figure out how to make this work in your district.

57:51

Um, we are, we have two minutes left, so if you have any burning questions, you want to ask our team, certainly you can use the hand raising hand raised feature or type into the question box.

58:08

So far, I'm not seeing any other questions, but I do, we do appreciate all the compliments, even though they were fishing. Let us know what's helpful to you. We want to make sure that this is a great use of your time to, we know you're busy out there.

58:24

Alright, I like to stay true to goal and we will conclude this little bit early, but if you have questions outstanding, you're thinking about this information, that link that's in the School Lunch Tray to submit questions for School Lunch Tray Table Talk. That's, that's, that's a go 24-7, so if you wake up at 3AM with a question, you just can't wait to ask us, certainly, submit it through there, too, and we will make sure that we address that. And potentially even focus of our resource for pilots to make sure that you haven't shown you need.

58:55

So, with that, I just, again, want to thank Michelle, our gracious hostess of this webinar from behind the scenes, and our team who is amazing.

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59:03

And with that, thank you all, for all you're doing out there and for joining us for a School Lunch Tray Table Talk.

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's Training for School Nutrition Programs 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/School_Lunch_Tray_Table_Talk_02_04_2021_Transcript.pdf.

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