

School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: March 4, 2021

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

0:05

Speaker 1 - Hi everybody, and welcome to School Lunch Tray Table Talk and Resource Roundup on this lovely Friday Eve, is how I like to refer to Thursdays helps to get through the week, so. Thank you so much for joining us and for telling your friends to join us, we're very excited that we're more and more, people are joining us.

0:26

Certainly, we are, we have changed the day, so not the day, but the time for these through March. We're trying to find the right time that is going to be best for as many people as we can.

0:38

Ah so, certainly, if there's, if there's general times, we may even send out a survey in the future to see what times and dates are, or days would work best for you and your colleagues.

0:49

So we have some really exciting updates here at the Department of Education as many of you probably saw, our now former Commissioner Cardona has been confirmed as the United States Secretary of Education um and I believe that happened two days ago, three days ago, I'm a little bit in a time warp.

1:07

Um, but I'm just really excited to see what he's going to do in that position, and he's just a tremendous leader.

1:13

We really, he made such a difference in the short period of time. He was our Commissioner here, and so, please join us in celebrating this and then congratulating him on that new and very important role.

1:26

I'm also very excited to update you that we have a new Interim Commissioner, who many of you know Charlene Russell-Tucker, who has been our Acting Deputy Commissioner, one of our Acting Deputy Commissioners, for the past year and a half, I believe.

1:43

And she really, really started at the Department of Education working in the Child Nutrition Programs. So she has long been a champion of these programs. She absolutely understands the vital importance, the critical role they play in student success, academic achievement, wellness, social, emotional learning, and so, we're just thrilled to see her, take the helm for the interim, and just, you know, Charlene, certainly, reach out and congratulate her as well. We're very, very excited to have her in the interim role, so um those are very exciting updates from the Department of Education.

2:18

So just to let you know, we are also, we have as a state in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Social Services, had our pandemic EBT 2.0 is what we're referring to it.

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2:31

We have a plan that was approved by USDA. We will provide information soon.

2:37

We know a lot of you have been updating the PSIS system and working with your PSIS Coordinator, um to make sure that, that, that each student's information is very up to date.

2:49

That information that, in order to for us and the Department of Social Services to determine eligibility and benefit levels um for the recipients of that program will definitely need to have very up to date information.

3:04

With that said, we know how much of a challenge it has been for you to collect Income Eligibility applications this year for Free and Reduced price school meals.

3:14

It is going to be vitally important that you continue to push to get those in.

3:21

We know, it's confusing. We know there's not a ton of incentive right now with, with, majority of you operating under the Summer Food Service Program or some Seamless Summer option of the National School Lunch Program.

3:32

It's hard to explain to households why you would still need those Income Eligibility Applications to be submitted when meals are being provided at no cost.

3:41

Certainly, um reach out and let us know if we can help you problem solve, do technical assistance.

3:47

The address collection that was done most recently in the PSIS system has been closed.

3:53

And we will um provide some additional information, again when we have those outreach materials finalized and have additional information on when those benefits may be issued and when your households can be um receiving them, so you have that information too.

4:10

Uh, but bear with us, this has definitely been, we have a proposal, our plan in Connecticut is a little bit more complex than what has been proposed in other states because we are trying to be as responsive situation as possible for the household.

4:27

Um and so that, that we will be doing another so that, you know, we will be doing another address collection prior to the end of the school year.

4:34

So certainly, work with your PSIS Coordinator, they will get the information from our performance office about the timing on that.

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4:41

Which is why I'm encouraging you now to do another big push for trying to get free and reduced price applications submitted, so that, that, that information is as current as possible, when we look at the second round of address collections, we will be able to go back retroactively to provide benefits if that information is updated and does change between the two different selections.

5:05

So more information on that is coming but just a little prelude for you, so, uh you know when, when it does come, it's not going to come out of nowhere.

5:13

With that, I am going to hand it off to Monica, who's going to talk with us a little bit about our first items on the School Lunch Tray Table Talk.

5:23

And again, just going to remind you, these are considered, these are our office hours. We are here for you. You can see our team here.

5:29

We are eager to help you, want to know what you're grappling with, what your problem solving. Thank you to those who submitted those questions ahead of time, that is always helpful.

5:38

That said, you can fit them throughout your question feature. Don't feel limited to the content in the school lunch tray things on your mind.

5:47

Put it in the question box. Let us know. We will do our best to answer it.

5:50

If we can't, we will take it back, we will do what we need to do to try and get you an answer, or we may reach out to you individually if you have a unique circumstances that you need some problem solving with.

6:00

So with that, I really will hand it off now and thank you so much, everybody, for joining us. So Monica, the floor is yours.

6:10

Speaker 2 - Thanks so much, Shannon. Good afternoon, everybody. Um, I wanted to start off with a brief introduction to the period of time now that Food Corps is accepting applications. We are providing this information on behalf of our wonderful partner, Connecticut.

6:29

Who is, it's been such a such a support in our schools with the service members who provide, there year of service in our schools, supporting school nutrition programs of the cafeteria, doing work in classrooms, Vo-ag and nutrition education and when they can out and gardens and other aspects. It's a wonderful organization. We've been so lucky to have I believe 20 service members the past couple of years, which is great.

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6:59

And their application time is now, the reason we're sharing is we want to support this partnership and we want to ask that you share this widely among your circles and communities that.

7:11

That way, anyone, may be interested is aware of.

7:14

The application period, the process, which they follow Program Director, Dawn Crayco, who many of you know, and Kathryn Powell, She is the Coordinator, and they've just been a great team, team members, to join us in our championing of school meals and providing this wonderful year of service for students.

7:34

Many young folks, but also sometimes not so young folk who go on to provide opportunities in other communities throughout the country when they're done, So, please share this as you can, and support this partner of ours.

7:50

Alright, um for the next, I'm going to touch now on USDA Foods usage, which is the next bullet.

7:57

You may be hearing us say this a few times, but it's going to bear saying again, we need you to evaluate where you are in your usage of your USDA Foods, and that's for all areas.

8:08

This would be your inventory that's at each HPC, your direct delivery items, pounds at processors, and the dollars you have in your DOD fund remaining.

8:19

Really, we should be at about 70% usage at this point of the year. Now, I know we have the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic this year, but ultimately, we have food that needs to be used and USDA charges us to make sure we're managing that here at the State. And ensuring that as much of this food into dollars involved with the DOD are used in the school year they're intended.

8:41

So please know that we will be and have been around pounds, title dollars, or cases of product as aided and will continue to do so, especially as we approach these last months.

8:54

A reminder that we have the request to donate form, which allows you to offer up some excuse me direct delivery items if you realize that you are going to have more than you can manage that at any time of the bunk. And it will be included in the next months off pranked.

9:14

That reminder is, that is coming up next Wednesday, second Wednesday of the month, March 10th will be the next opportunity to order some of these excess items, if there are things that you can use.

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9:26

So keep an eye out next week, up, remember, only the items listed when we offer those next week that are available, that month and.

9:36

Order, and, again, as you go for the month, but to donate, can be submitted at any time, and then, we go onto USDA Foods and an update with HPC.

9:48

We are aware of the challenges that many of you are facing with deliveries from HPC. We appreciate that and understand your frustration. We appreciate your flexibility and falling back onto plan B, C, and D sometimes to accommodate these changes that have been coming up with deliveries, whether it's days are scheduled, or cancelations.

10:11

The pandemic has of course, presented a myriad of problems expected their ability due to staff or warehouse delivery right now, uh, but we're not taking these concerns lightly. We want to make sure that they're doing their best to meet your obligations.

10:29

So now, I guess to kick step back, we have to contract to see, so it's easy to get confused.

10:37

They are doing the direct delivery warehousing for us at the state level. So we are doing weekly meetings now with Department of Administrative Services.

10:46

They are our contract management arm of state agencies and with us in HPC to address the concerns that come up each week. So, please continue to send those in.

10:58

They also hold the regional DOD contract, which is managed by USDA, and DOD so, they, too, are now in weekly meetings with HPC to manage the situation, the problems, and to talk about what kind of resolution we can come to.

11:00

Please if you can, when you do send in any concerns, be very clear as to whether it is or a delivery, or DOD, or even if it's a mixed delivery, I know that happens as, that will help us, then direct, which meeting these need to be brought up in.

11:32

So that we can bring these two resolution do know that they are doing a lot behind the scenes as well. We're working on communication, we're really partnering with them to make sure that whatever issues they have they're going to bring as quick to a resolution as possible and look forward. So um again, thank you for your patience with that.

11:53

And then finally, last but not least we have the reminder that uh we are in the middle of ordering for next year. So please remember the deadline is a week from tomorrow, Friday, March 12th.

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12:05

We've had the catalog open about 2 or 3 weeks now. So if this is the first time you're hearing this, you still have time, you have over a week, but you need to go back and the link is right there in the uh School Lunch Tray to the February 10th.

12:18

The School Lunch Tray which gave the detailed information on how to place the order for this year. If you have any questions do feel free to reach out to either myself or Allyson, we're always here to help. Um but order should be getting placed, and you're not at that point, please make sure you're reaching out as possible, we only have about a week left. I think, oh, and one more quick reminder on that as well. An issue that came up was the fact that, remember, you need to be an Internet explorer in order to get the functionality of web supply. That came up as an issue for someone would use or Chrome, or a different one, and it couldn't continue through the process until they switched to Internet Explorer. So, quick reminder on that be in Internet Explorer when you access.

13:03

Alright, I think that covers it for me. Fionnuala if you are taking over, or if I'm passing it off to somebody else?

13:12

Speaker 3 - Thanks so much, Monica. I am passing it off to someone else.

13:17

So, Susan Fiore is going to be covering the next topic and are you ready to take the screen, Susan, okay? You're on mute, Susan.

13:41

Speaker 4 - Here we go, is that better?

13:44

Okay, good afternoon everybody so our next update is about some resources that you're probably familiar with, but if you're not, I think it's a good reminder, and that's the USDA's Food Buying Guide and standardized recipes. And if you haven't taken a look at the Food buying guide recently, it's really your go to resource for how to credit foods in school nutrition programs. All of the Child Nutrition Programs actually. And to figure out exactly how much food you need to credit towards the meal pattern. So the food buying guide divides sections by each of the meal pattern components and includes information on how much food to buy to meet certain meal pattern requirements. So, for example, if you're looking to figure out how many pounds of raw broccoli do you need to provide 100 servings of a half a cup each or how much uncooked rice yields 100 cups of cooked rice. So that's where you're gonna find that information.

14:49

And if you have not taken a look yet, the USDA has a training webpage for the food buying guide and I just want to go in there quickly.

14:58

I think I might need to pull this in front, over here. Here we go, and on that page, there's a lot of really great resources. There's some training modules, as well as webinars, and you can see some of them here. So I encourage you, if you haven't gone there yet, to take a look, because it does provide basic. Yes.

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15:18

Speaker 1 - I'm sorry to interrupt, but I think your screen is not, your screen sharing is not working. Speaker 4 - So can you see what can you see?

15:29

Can you see me?

15:32

Can you see the School Lunch Tray?

15:37

Speaker 1 - Nope. Just us now.

15:42

Speaker 4 - Let me see.

15:46

I don't know, Fionnuala, do you want to, did you do the change presenter?

15:54

Speaker 5 - It says you're the presenter, Susan, so you can't you can't see my screen share your screen, and are you using two monitors?

16:03

Speaker 4 - I am using two monitors that could be there.

16:09

Okay, oh, thanks, Michelle, for your help.

16:17

Alright. So we are live, as you can tell, OK. So where I was navigating before was to the food buying guide, I'm going to try this and see if this works.

16:27

Can you see the webpage?

16:32

Speaker 1 - Yes, OK, great. So it's a little off to the side. It's a little off for me, too. Yeah. I'm not quite sure what's going on. But at any rate, you can see that there are several resources here for training, as well as webinars. And there are also some additional apps.

16:53

Speaker 4 - That you can get on your phone. So that's really a good place to check out and see what's going on with the food buying guide.

17:00

Let's get that out of the way.

17:03

And we'll come back here. And the other thing I wanted to mention: Team Nutrition Recipes are Healthy Kids cookbook.

17:10

And if you're not familiar with these, these are recipes, that group for a variety of different recipes by component.

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So if we take a look here, and I'm going to pull the screen down in a second, OK, let's see, there we go. So this cookbook has 5100 servings and it's grouped by whole grains and the different types of subgroups for the vegetables and so forth. So you can really find some great, healthy recipes here that are kid tested, Kit approved. And if you haven't had a chance to check that out, and you're looking for something new for your menus, that might be a good place for you to go.

17:52

All right. So, let me move this back out of the way.

17:57

Alrighty, so, the next thing that I wanted to talk about was some updates this year for our Healthy Foods certification, and those of you who are public schools have gotten some e-mails recently and just as a reminder, this does not apply to private schools or RCCIs. I don't know if we have any folks from those schools on the webinar with us today. But if so, this does not apply to you just for public schools. And you've been receiving some e-mails recently, regarding HFC, and I just want to make sure that everyone is clear on the requirements for this year and next year. I know it's very confusing because we're kind of sending information out at the same time, for both years. So this, this section of the School Lunch Tray, it gives you a little bit of an outline of what you've received and what you're going to receive for next year. So just as a reminder, we are in the process of reviewing all of the HFC applications for the current school year, 2020-21.

18:56

And many of you will have already received an e-mail from me that indicates your application was approved, or if there's additional information required, that e-mail will indicate that as well. So if you're receiving that information, please note that, that is about the current school year only, that's our 2020-21 application, and not to be confused with next year's application, which we're also sending out information on at the same time.

19:24

So, the current school year. I'm sorry, next school year, the planning for that is starting now. And what this information basically remind you is that you really want to think now about getting your board vote scheduled so that you can meet the deadline of July one, which is the deadline that the Board must vote by in order for the district to participate in Healthy Certification. So, there are, there will be a memo that's coming out, uh hopefully in the next week or so, that outlines these requirements. But in the meantime, we know that a lot of you are getting your boards ready to vote in March. So we wanted to make sure that you have that language now so that you can go ahead and get that language to your Board in terms of the vote.

20:12

So one, a couple key points to remember about this is when your vote happens, you're not gonna do anything with the information quite yet. You're gonna hold onto those meeting minutes and sometime in May, when we open up the CNP system for next year's application, then you'll be able to complete your Healthy Food Certification Statement. And upload those minutes at that time. So, once your board has voted, don't do anything, just hold onto those minutes. Don't send them to us, Just keep them on file, and we'll let you know as soon as the application is ready for the 2021-22 school year. And, again, that usually is sometime in mid-May.

20:52

Another key point to remind you about is the language.

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20:56

Every year, we have districts that submit language that's not in the memo.

21:01

And the reason this can be problematic is sometimes, the language makes you out of compliance with the state statutes, for example, I had a district that submitted language for the exemptions. That was not the same as the exemption language and state statute, and that made their exemptions out of compliance. So, it's really important to use the language that we provide you, we make it hopefully fairly easy to just kinda copy, copy and paste that language, and stick it right into your board motions, and we really do encourage you to use that language, exactly, as, is, because it can prevent problems in the future, from language that might not comply with the state statutes.

21:42

So, in terms of the next school year, there are two required motions for Healthy Food Certification.

21:53

The first one is the vote to actually participate in Healthy Food Certification. So the District says, yes, we will follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards.

22:02

Are all foods sold to students on school premises separately from reimbursable school meals? And that's what the first vote does.

22:09

If the district says yes to healthy foods certification, and typically, we have about 96% of our public school districts that do say, yes.

22:16

Then they need to do the second motion, which is the language for the exemption.

22:23

So if you're voting yes to healthy foods certification, then you're going to vote whether you're going to allow food exemptions and the exemptions, or allow you to sell foods that don't comply with the Connecticut nutrition standards, under some specific criteria.

22:37

And those criteria are that the food sales occur after the school there are on the weekends, or at the location of an event, and they're not sold from a vending machine or school store. So that's what you're saying when you're allowing the vote for food exemptions.

22:51

So all public schools must vote on those two exemptions, and those must be recorded in your minutes. And again, I encourage you make sure that your minutes reflect the exact language that we provide you in this document and you'll also see it in the memo that comes out in a few weeks on the healthy Food Certification application for next school year.

23:17

So in addition, some information is included on beverages here because beverages are not part of healthy food certification.

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23:25

Healthy food certification applies only to food and beverage. exemptions are a separate state statute. So the beverage statute applies to all public schools, regardless of whether they participate in the National School Lunch Program, and, regardless of whether they say yes to Healthy Food Certification.

23:43

So, it applies to all public schools, period.

23:46

Districts can decide if they choose to allow beverage exemptions for beverages that don't comply with the requirements of the State statute, and if they do decide to do this, we strongly recommend that the Board vote for the beverage exemptions occurs at the same time, as a Board vote for healthy food certification.

24:06

So, in that case, we've provided some language here for you, as well, that shows you what the motion language for the beverage exemption should look like.

24:15

So, if you're, if you're counting, we now have three motions. We have one for healthy food participation. We have one for healthy food exemptions, and we have another for beverage exemptions.

24:26

To simplify the process, we also allow you the option of combining the food and beverage exemptions, and you can see that language here.

24:34

So, instead of having three motions, one for participation, one for beverage exemptions, one for food exemptions, you can combine the beverages and foods together and make them as one exemption, as indicated here. So, that is pretty much um simplified version of doing the exemptions in two separate votes.

24:55

Um that's it in a nutshell. We'll be providing you with more information on Healthy Food Certification in the very near future, and if you have any questions, certainly reach out to me. We can take questions, I think, either at the end of the webinar today are now. Shannon it doesn't matter to me, whichever way we wanna go.

25:15

Um but please do reach out if you have questions and I would just encourage you, make sure you thoroughly read the information and use the language we provide, and then it'll be smooth sailing to get your applications approved for next year's healthy food certification.

25:30

Speaker 1 - That says, I think that's a really good point all around, really, for, for we, our team works really hard to give you exactly what you need.

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25:41

So, you don't have to recreate the wheel or become inventive, and test. The language is there for a year, two years, so that it is easy, as Susan said. And that's not just true for Healthy Food Certification.

25:53

If you are in our program guidance, and looking at templates, at resources at presentations, our team often puts that together for you to just be able to use in order to train your staff and, and satisfy the regulatory and rural requirements, both at the state and federal level.

26:10

So, um certainly, get familiar with program guidance, bookmark it in all of your browsers, if you haven't yet. And just know that, if, if it's something you are facing, it's likely we have a resource for you that is easily modifiable. Or you can just use, so certainly, I've mentioned in previous school lunch tray as we've received a ton of national recognition.

26:34

A lot of State agencies look to our program materials and resources, USDA looks to our program resources, and uses it themselves, so, certainly, it's there for you, so don't re-invent the wheel, that's my theme for today.

26:50

So, we do have one question around healthy food certification, Susan, and I can, I can probably field this one, with the rich, probably sound surprising until you read it, so, it says, Will we be receiving healthy food certification funding this year?

27:05

So, yes, if you if you followed our instruction and submitted the very, very modified documentation, which was your board vote statement, then you will receive the certification once we are able to approve that application.

27:26

So, as you know, this is a state statute with the unprecedented circumstances that have allowed us to implement flexibilities authorized or the USDA to operate the Summer Food Service program and then the Seamless Summer Option at the National School Lunch Program during a school year.

27:43

That has never happened before, so the language in the state statute is very specific to operating the national School lunch program, and so we had to work with our governor's office to make sure that we had an executive order in place to allow our commissioner to reasonably interpret upsets, us statutes.

28:07

Very similar to what happened with our state's severe needs school breakfast grant funds as well.

28:13

So because that is an entirely different process and a set of internal criteria and authorizations and all of the things you could possibly imagine that needs to go into that. Everything was delayed this year, but we are furiously.

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28:27

And by we, I mean, Susan is going through retry contract, that is raising, raising the volume of think she has an airplane. So she's working very hard to get those applications approved. Our Bureau of Grants Management and standing at the ready to be able to issue those payments were able to get that out the door.

28:49

But keep in mind, especially with these flexibilities, and with the way we have to implement that, we have to be at extra cautious and making sure that we are doing our diligence and making sure that we are following everything to the T, so that we, we have everything in place to be able to issue these funds.

29:09

So, please, we know you've been patient with us, continuing your patient. It's definitely a process.

29:15

But you will receive those for this year, and you will also receive the information from that communication that was in the school lunch Chair. What Susan just referred to, about the strange timing for this year, you will also have, that app, would have the ability to apply for next year.

29:32

So it's very funky timing.

29:34

We're hoping things might get back on track into a more a timeline you might be more familiar with sometime in the near future, but until then, we are in this adventure together. And we are working very hard to make sure that we can get that to you.

29:49

Um that's the only question, we have on Healthy Food Certification so far.

29:53

But certainly, if you have more, Susan's going to be here even if you can't see her and join us to answer any of your question.

30:00

So certainly write those in the question box.

30:03

We highly encourage you to do that again, whether it's about Healthy Food Certification or something else. Certainly, we're here, we have this time for you.

30:13

With that, I'm going to take this next section.

30:17

I get to talk about other money stuff today.

30:19

So a lot of you are aware that the Department of Education sent out a communication last week for attendance regarding the ESSAR 1 and 2 funds, which are more commonly known as the Cares Act funds.

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30:33

So when Congress re-authorized and reach and sent an additional round of funding around this to help support local education agencies, we at the state level are responsible for administering that.

30:46

So uh next week, or let me let me back up. So as you can read and the correspondence, we've had a few of you reach out to us to ask questions.

30:55

But really, if you could encourage yours, or ask those questions to your school business official, your superintendent, if they have questions, encourage them to use the contact information, so that they can be directed as appropriate.

31:11

Uh Next week, there will be a call, I believe, it's a call, it might be a webinar with school business officials and our Chief Financial Officer, Kathy Dempsey.

31:21

And she will be talking with them a little bit further about this. So certainly, if they're unaware of that, that's a tidbit you can pass along, and encourage them to be part of that. But, at this time, that's all the information we have to provide to you, but your school business officials will receive additional information from the Department.

31:44

All right.

31:44

So, I think we are at the end of our school lunch tray table talk, and ready to transition into our resource roundup, and thanks for coming back for that.

31:55

I leave it to show.

31:58

Speaker 3 - Thanks, Shannon.

31:59

OK, so, so we have a document here for Resource from Round up and Susan Fiore. And myself, we're going to go over this. And, Susan, are you back on?

32:15

I am, can you see me, hear me?

32:18

Speaker 3 - I can see, and I think you have control, because I was having some logistical issues with my screen.

32:25

Speaker 4 - So yes, so I can, I can start off, and I just wanted to help folks see where to find these resources.

32:36

So Fionnuala, if, before we go into the document, if you can, back out of it for one second, and just go to the webpage itself, the meal counting and claiming webpage.

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32:52

Speaker 3 - Will do, Thank you.

32:59

Speaker 4 - Get a map, okay.

33:01

So, here we go, guiding, and claiming, right? So, I just wanted to navigate folks a little bit, Now, you know you can find meal counting and claiming for school nutrition programs.

33:12

From our program guidance page under M, very easy to get to, and on this page, if we just go up, scroll up a little bit familiar.

33:22

Keep going to the section that has all the good resources there. We go keep going up a little there. We go, you're going to see here, under the Connecticut forms and resources There are many different resources that can help you with meal counting and claiming including edit check forms. The Meal Count Forms, there are two very critical forms for the meal: counting and claiming process, which is the meal Application and Data Management process form, and also the site information on Money Collection, Point of Service Meal Count System form, as well as my other monitoring forums. So, this is where you can access all those forms. And Fidel is going to be going into a few of these as we go through our key document, that we're highlighting today, but I just wanted to show you where they are, as well as a couple of the resources, that you're going to see right below.

34:08

There's information for the claims preparer and this information for the school business officials. And again, Fionnuala is going to highlight those, but they're all here in one place, so they're easy to find for you. And they contain guidance on, those two documents can contain guidance on the division of responsibility for submitting claims.

34:29

Um as well as the document for the business officials, includes additional information regarding a whole bunch of things around school nutrition programs that business officials need to know. So, if you have not shared that document with your business official, that's, that's a really good resource to have.

34:45

Then, right below that, we have a couple other resources. The Overview of Meal Counting and Claiming, we're going to click into that in a minute. That's the one we're highlighting today. And below that, we have some other requirements that outline the meal, counting and claiming procedures for classroom meals and field trip meals, and well, no one's doing field trip meals. Currently, with COVID this is definitely a good resources for you to be aware of for when we do Fionnuala, resume, normal operations, and half field trip meals.

35:14

And right below that, Fionnuala, if we scroll down just a little bit more, we've got some USDA guidance and requirements as well.

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35:22

So the other, the other resource I wanted to show you on this page, if we scroll back up and go on the left bar, the left navigation bar, all the way up to the top, and then we click on documents and forms.

35:41

You're going to see all of those forms that we just saw, links to in the beginning, the edit checks, the meal counts, and if we keep scrolling down.

35:53

The monitoring forums, so, that's where those live on that documents page.

35:58

And then, if you click back out Fionnuala, to the, or you can look on the left-hand side to the related resources.

36:09

You're going to see a whole bunch of other resources that relate to meal counting and claiming. And, if you just stop for one second renewal at the top, I just want to call people's attention to that blue box, because that blue box allows you to click and get directly to the section of the page that contains the documents you are interested in. So, for example, unpaid meal charges, which is at the very bottom of the page to know if you click on that.

36:33

There you go, right, down to unpaid meal charges. So it's just an easy way to find all of the resources that go along with meal counting and claiming.

36:41

So, I think now we can go back to our main document that we're highlighting today. So, if you go back to the overview page.

36:51

And we're going to click on our Overview of Meal Counting and Claiming.

37:00

I just wanted to highlight a couple of things, and then Fionnuala is going to go in and look at look at some of these documents that are going to provide some valuable information for you.

37:12

And in this document, we have really a one stop shop for everything you know need to know about meal counting and claiming.

37:19

And so, we've got the USDA requirements for all of the child nutrition programs as well as the specific elements for accountable acceptable counting and claiming each one's there. And under each one of those six elements, when we scroll down to the first page, you'll see that each one has steps.

37:41

It indicates the tasks for you to achieve what that step is, the timeframe that those tasks should occur, and then a whole bunch of resources that help you to implement that task. And just one

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other thing before I turn it over to Fionnuala, if you, if you scroll back up to the top of that first page.

38:01

Sorry, for all of them. The main page, right underneath the elements.

38:05

I just want to remind folks, who have the green box. I just want to remind folks that, as you know, these are not normal times with COVID, we have a ton of waivers, and in different ways of doing things going on, and so that if you have a USDA waiver proved for a particular area, then that waiver applies.

38:23

If it conflicts with the information in this document, and you're gonna follow the information that that waiver tells you to do, so, I just, wanted to give folks a reminder, that, that, that applies to all of the resources, and information, and requirements for our programs, so, I think, Fionnuala, that's it for me, and I'll turn it over to you, to highlight some of the resources that are useful to folks in this document.

38:48

Speaker 3 - Okay, great. Thank you so much, Susan.

38:52

That is always a good reminder of just how to navigate the website, because just being aware that that toolbar that's available on the sign there, for the overview of the hands they related documents, are the related resources, and forms and documents, because it is very important to know how to get to the documents. So, as Susan said, this overview report is great, because it has everything you need to know about meal counting and claiming in one document. So, this is something that we put together a few years ago.

39:29

And it is really helpful for anyone new to the responsibilities of these federal Child Nutrition Programs, and has any responsibility whatsoever with anything to do with meal counting and claiming, because not only the Claims Preparer and the Business Manager. You may have multiple individuals that are responsible for different elements of this process. So, this is a nice way to kind of go through and show you all of the steps.

39:59

And if, if a person is only responsible, maybe, for processing applications here in step one, they still can kind of see how that relates to the whole meal, counting and claiming process. So, I'm not going to go through on all of these, specifically, we just wanted to make you aware of this document, and that it has the arm.

40:24

The seven steps, I will just highlight that, um as Susan said, some of these areas and regulations are not currently in place because you are operating potentially the Summer Food Service Program, or the Seamless Summer Option.

40:39

So, maintaining eligibility documents is really stepping on when we're talking about the overview of Meal Counting and Claiming, and, um, the second step would be developing lending

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collection, and Point of Service Meal Count system, developing that. And this is where I'm gonna pause a little, because it's step 2 and 3, that really talk about point of service meal counts.

41:08

And we know that that is really one of the most important elements when you're talking about accurate meal counts, is to make sure they are point of service counts.

41:20

So, the one document that I thought would be relevant to do kind of a deep dive is, the classroom meals here.

41:32

This is something that, for many Seamless Summer Option sponsors and even SFSP, and in the current environment with COVID, a lot of meals are being distributed and consumed outside of the cafeteria, maybe up in the gymnasium, other spaces and certainly in classrooms.

41:56

So, we thought it would be great to overview some of the requirements around classroom meals, or just classrooms in, or meals in general, outside of the cafeteria.

42:10

So, I'm going to go into this document here.

42:17

We put this together a few years ago, because when we were out conducting administrative reviews, we really saw this, as, there was some common issues with in classroom meals.

42:30

So one of the big things within classroom meals, as I said, is making sure you have that point of service, those accurate meal counts, whatever process you have in place for point of service meals, must yield accurate counts, and one of the big things we see with classroom meals is that potentially the that requirement to have the count taken when the child actually receives the reimbursable meal is sometimes out of compliance, right?

43:02

So we see with classroom meals that the number of meals being claimed to be the number of on meals sent to the classroom, or sometimes attendance is used, so that was it, that's a huge issue. When you're looking at classroom meals, you want to make sure that point of service counts are actually happening in the classroom, and I've, I've talked to a few different sponsors in here that are brand-new to classroom meals, and they were not aware that this is actually a requirement.

43:37

So, you cannot uh say that I'm sending 20 meals to classroom, May 15 meals to classroom, B, and B, claiming 35 meals for classroom A and B because those are not point of service counts. The count has to happen in the classroom um when the child receives the reimbursable meal.

43:57

I'll go into a little more detail around that in a little bit. So, um another area that we would see is potentially students taking the meal counts. And that is not appropriate um if you are implementing offer versus serve in the classroom. That the individual who is then responsible to

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take the point of service count, if that is being done, is not necessarily aware of what items the child is required to have in order for it to count as a meal.

44:30

And so a big part of that is the fact that in, in the classrooms and when meals are being served outside of the cafeteria, there are other people responsible for those point of service counts. So when the responsibility is on a teacher, then you do need to consider, and if you're doing things, they're doing things correctly. If they're on substitute teachers, then in place there they need to know what needs to happen for accurate point of service.

45:00

Um incorrectly identifying reimbursable meals, not offering the required full cup of fruit or vegetable at breakfast, so half a cup of fruit or vegetable with breakfast.

45:14

So, again, these are concerns, that we have seen with in classroom meals. And this form is wonderful. There's 12 pages and it really tells you everything you need to consider um in order to make sure that you are meeting the regulations. If you're serving meals in the classroom.

45:34

So it goes through here. All that you need to know starts off with meal pattern clients. Making sure that the meals.

45:47

Sure, being outside of the cafeteria are in compliance with USDA's Meal Patterns and obviously taking into consideration preschool as well.

46:00

Then down here, when it talks about, um, meal counts, one of the things that we found is most effective is that you actually have a process. So you have a written process and procedure or taking point of service counts. And once you have it in, in writing, then you can obviously um train the necessary staff to be able to do that. And then it will be there as a reference as well.

46:27

So you do need to have some written instructions available for features, anyone outside of the food service department that's going to be taking on point of service counts to make sure they are doing it correctly.

46:42

So um with those instructions, you would include everything. You know, it gives you ideas here, everything that they would need to know, as I said, that you could train them, and then also may be available in the classroom. So if there are substitute teachers, there are people filling in that they can follow those instructions, and they know what to do, um if a child, only takes two days of milk and doesn't take the entire bag of lunch, they know what to do with leftover meals, how to handle all of these problems that might arise, so that is listed there. Also, how to handle offer versus serve the requirement there.

47:30

And down, we're not seeing so much families, child meal service in the classroom, but, food safety, that's another huge issue that you need to make sure that you have good control of. So, to use these resources for any meals outside of the cafeteria, you'd want to have standard operating

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procedures that cover how you are handling that food That is go into the classroom how it is going to be maintain proper temperature if you're sending it hot cold. What they're doing, as I said with leftovers all of this falls under food safety and sanitation, and we have really great guidance right here for you with that.

48:21

So, food safety, you certainly need to consider that.

48:24

Um, timing of meals. Many districts now are implementing the waiver, so that's not as big of an issue. But staff training. This is another key area.

48:36

If you are giving responsibility over to non food service staff, too, too, comply with these federal regulations. There needs to be training. We can't just assume that the teachers, or the Paras or whoever would be taking point of service counts know what they're doing. So there needs to be adequate training around that. And also, with civil rights, uh that would be included with the training as well. And, again, all of the resources are here for you.

49:12

And then the big thing is monitoring.

49:14

Once you've established, you have written procedures, you've trained staff, or you've provided training to the principal and principal trained, the staff, but you have to monitor that. In fact, the regulations are being followed, so this gives you some ways of doing that. Some things that might be red flags, as far as the counts, that come back to the, to the classroom. But, certainly, going into the classroom, and kind of taking a look at those key elements, and that specific procedure to your local district would be essential.

49:52

And after monitoring, if you identify that this can't, no matter what, with extensive training, or whatever the case, that you can't carry it out, then you need to look at an alternate method.

50:07

So we've seen some districts that it's just impossible to leave the counts up to the, to the teachers. They have many other things on their plate. It's just two different cultures to train all of the teaching staff, and then, certainly now with the number of substitute teachers, and you may need to look at another method.

50:29

So another model, many districts may pull back in classroom feeding or the count in the classroom and do more of a grab and go, so setting up stations out in the hallway or different areas.

50:45

So then the responsibility is taken back to the food service staff member who is well trained with offer versus serve and point of service counts and civil rights and everything else. So you may want to consider that. But the key message here is that if you are doing in classroom feeding and that you, this is new for you.

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51:07

You cannot use the number of meals that you're just sending out from the classroom, are from the cafeteria, or attendance. It has to be, or what order you have to, some sort of point of service account. So, that has to either be a roster, paper, roster, or a Google Doc, something that an action is being taken at the point that the child is taking, taking that meal.

51:38

So, we also list out here some best practices.

51:43

So, this is a great document that really has everything you need.

51:47

You need to consider when you are, um, involved with in classroom, creating some signage, clear signage is excellent. So, not only of those policies and procedures, and then training staff to have some quick reference right on the coolers, right, on the cards for the for the day, would help out as well.

52:09

So, again, this is everything you need to know about in classroom speeding.

52:20

So I'm not sure if we have any questions on that?

52:27

Speaker 1 – Fionnuala, thanks so much. Right now, we don't have any questions in the question box, so certainly feel free to submit those. We have a few more minutes today.

52:37

We do have a question kind of unrelated that was submitted ahead of time.

52:43

So this is also a great opportunity for me to remind you that we have that link that is in every single school lunch tray, it doesn't change for you to submit questions at anytime. It doesn't timeout.

52:55

Let us know what's on your mind so that we can help answer your questions, Al, quite honestly, about 99% of the questions that you do submit are good information for everybody.

53:06

And so, for those folks who are very specific information, very specific, request, that helps us know which of our team members will follow up with you, as well. So, can't hurt to ask.

53:19

So, the question that was submitted ahead of time, I'm going to ask Caroline to join us to answer so that I hadn't read it while she presses her video, or her unmute button.

53:31

So, Hey, Caroline.

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53:35

When completing the summer food service paragraph for Summer Food Service Program year 2020- 21, application, budget and checklist items specifically, should this be for the current program, flier or for the actual summer, the June through August period?

53:56

But I hope you'll, you'll give some, some of that good news around this application as a year. Doesn't answer this?

54:04

Speaker 6 - I hope so I don't know what that means.

54:08

Question, great question, and we have been getting a lot of e-mails with questions specifically about the budget, but a little bit about the checklist items, too, So I apologize that we or not.

54:22

More specific in the instructions. Certainly, it would have been helpful to all of you if we had so apologies.

54:28

And we were just excited that we had figured out a way that we're hoping to get you through the application process while in advance of the summer.

54:36

And take some of the last-minute end of school year or early summer burden off of you.

54:40

And, um so, the short answer is that this is a program year that runs from October first to September 30th.

54:51

And that is the program year that we are addressing in this year's documentation, specific to the budget.

54:59

We are currently, we currently have sponsors approved through October first through June 30th so your budget would be appropriate to be for the time period that your application is approved for.

55:10

If you feel strongly that you already have a budget that's constructed for the entire program year, and you want to use that budget rather than create a whole new budget, I think if you work with either myself or Terese, whoever has been approving your application for the couple last couple rounds of applications, we can certainly work with you on that.

55:29

This is not an exercise, an extra work for anyone, um but if you have a school year budget already created for your district, please feel free to use that.

55:41

Um I know that wasn't the clearest answer. Again, I don't want to create extra work for anyone, but you're currently approved from October one through September through, apologies, June

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30th. So, that's the budget that makes sense currently. If you have another budget already created, that you would prefer to use, just reach out to your consultant, that you've been working with unapproachable, so far.

56:02

Specific to the checklist items. This would be items like your training documentation, so, your agenda of training topics, and your attendance at training.

56:12

Your authorized signer, signing off that training has been conducted and visits, uh, haven't done to any sites, it should, they've had a pre operational visit. Those type of checklist items.

56:30

We've been getting some questions about whether you can use the documents from June, 2020, if you think that June 2020 was not this program year, so those are not documents that pertain to this program year, you need to be thinking about the program year, starting October first and hopefully, that will help you answer the questions as to what dates should appear on items. I think that's it.

56:57

Speaker 1 - Thanks so much, Caroline. So, the good news is that we are working really hard to try.

57:04

For those of you who are going to be operating through the summer, we are working through trying to figure out if, if we can prevent You having to fill out an additional application. So stay tuned on that, we're working very hard on that we have not had word yet from the USDA on whether the nationwide waivers will be extended beyond June 30th.

57:25

Which is why that date is, is in existence right now for your application that. I was just speaking to. So, again, as soon as, as soon as we hear word from, USDA about whether these flexibilities will be extended, will certainly get that information to you, as timely, as a way that we can, as, you know, and as experienced, over the past, since last March.

57:50

We sometimes need to develop the actual documents in order to allow you to proceed with those flexibilities.

57:57

So, um right now you're in the process for the Summer Food Service Program, sponsors of completing all of the items that you need to complete your actual application for the, um, and also, for all of the Summer meal sponsors and National School Lunch Program operators, any of the waiver flexibilities that you've implemented, you are now working to make sure that that information is updated in the CNP online system. So we will need that site level information, that is a requirement, exercising these flexibilities.

58:30

So, thank you so much, everybody, I'm not seeing any other questions for us today. Her time and day, grant.

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58:39

Speaker 6 - Sorry, I was just going to jump in real quickly and say, I should have clarified you all found wandering around in the background. He was gone for this entire time until my camera went on.

58:53

Keep in mind that we are working towards getting you through the application process for this program year, and that's our goal. But there are, obviously, will be some site application updates.

59:02

As we get close to summer, because we know that you are probably not have a site profile that looks over the summer, like it does now. For any of you that do, that's wonderful, but you'll still need an extension of your approval date, but many of you will probably be closing some sites, possibly opening some different community sites.

59:21

So, we're, we're looking to get you through the bulk of the application now, with the understanding that we're just going to make sure that we continue throughout the program year to ensure that your application packet reflects your current operations um timing wise, as closely as we can to make sure that there's no challenges with you being, being reimbursed for all of the meals that you're handing out.

59:44

Speaker 1 - That was great point. Thank you, Caroline.

59:47

So, that was, that brings us to the exact time to the end this time. So, thank you, everybody, for joining us. Thank you, everybody, for what you're doing out there. You make a huge difference in the lives of kids and adults across our state. So keep it up. We know it's tough.

1:00:04

We're in it with you. Thank you, and have a wonderful day. We'll see you next week.

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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.

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