

## School Lunch Tray Table Talk Transcript: April 29, 2021

**Presenters/Attendees:** Speaker 1 – Shannon Yearwood, Speaker 2 – Teri Dandeneau, Speaker 3 – Sean Fogarty, Speaker 4 – Susan Alston, Speaker 5 – Susan Fiore, Speaker 6 – Fionnuala Brown, Speaker 7 – Caroline Cooke, Monica Pacheco, Andy Paul, Hostess – Michelle Rosado

0:03

Speaker 1 - Hi, and welcome to the Connecticut State Department of Education's School Lunch Tray Table Talk.

0:09

I'm Shannon Yearwood the Education Manager, who works with the Child Nutrition Programs, and you see I have a very good amount of our team on here to join me today. And as we walk through this table or the School Lunch Tray, keep in mind that we are treating this like our office hours.

0:27

So in this virtual world we live in, we want to make ourselves accessible, and be able to provide you with the technical assistance, support, resources, and materials, that you need to navigate through these difficult times.

0:39

So make sure that you submit those questions into the question box, as we go. When we pause between our School Lunch Tray and our Resource Roundup, we will answer some of those questions then, to the best of our abilities. Some of your questions we may not be able to answer, so we will take those back.

0:55

I hope you all enjoyed your spring break, whether it was two weeks ago or a week ago, it probably seems like ages ago. But we know that you deserve a huge break and a huge thank you for all that you do. And so with that, we have a lot of content today.

1:11

So, I am going to just jump right in, and our team will be here. So if you have those questions, you know, I can't answer, we have an amazing team of people here who might be able to help you navigate that.

1:23

So, with that, we can jump into our first topic.

1:27

And it's me again.

1:29

So, just to let you know, we are, we do apologize for the last-minute time change we actually will be talking about today at the Resource Roundup or these amazing 12 new nationwide waivers. And so we needed to move Table Talk today, because USDA is training us today at the two o'clock time on how we can implement these waivers to the best of our ability.

1:51

So thank you, so much, for joining us.

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1:52

If you couldn't make the time change, if your friends couldn't make the time change, certainly make sure that they know how to find the recordings on our School Lunch Tray, um School Lunch Tray training page, having a hard time with all these teeth today.

2:06

We can just jump right into the next topic here Fionnuala, and that is the Pandemic EBT.

2:13

So, I know all of you have been receiving calls and e-mails from your household wondering how do we, how do we navigate this round of Pandemic EBT, you know by now it's very different than it was last fall when we were able last spring, I'm sorry when we were able to operate it.

2:31

It has a little bit more complexities this year if you missed our March 25th webinar certainly you can find that on our training page.

2:37

And that's really when we went into the differences between the first round of pandemic EBT which we are lovingly calling 1.0 and this round which is referred to as 2.0.

2:48

So, we are working with our sister agency at the Department of Social Services, to make sure that you have all of the resources you need.

2:55

One of the biggest differences with this round of P-EBT, we've talked about this before, is that we need to take into account the students' learning mode status each month of the school year, in order to determine the correct benefit levels for that household that we know, that we did an address collection earlier this year, in February, and a lot of districts have been, well, all the districts have been reporting, learning more data to us.

3:24

We've heard from a few of you that some of that data needs to be corrected, and so we will be issuing guidance to our superintendents, hopefully in the next week or so to be able to help clarify how you can address some of those concerns.

3:36

We will open up the Public School Information System or PSIS, as we know it even better in June to do another address collection. And at that time we will be allowing districts to submit corrected information from the beginning of the school year.

3:53

So please stay tuned, we will send out, we'll make sure your superintendents have this information, and we will make sure that you also have this information once we are ready to release. But please let your households know that there is going to be an opportunity to reconcile those benefit levels, if they believe that those were incorrect, and the school district agrees.

4:12

The only data that we are accepting enter to be able to determine those benefit levels is through the learning or data that is submitted through the school. That's the best way for us to verify that,

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validate it, and make sure that it, we are setting the appropriate benefit levels. So it'd be really important that you pay close attention to that.

4:32

The other thing we know is that a lot of the food service folks are getting these phone calls because it has to do with food.

4:38

But really, the only reason that our sister agency is sending folks to the school district is to better understand how the school district reported that learning mode data.

4:48

So for you food service folks out there who are getting these calls, not sure how to answer them. You may want to connect with your person in your district who manages your data for the PSIS.

4:59

In the meantime, we are continually building out this page for Pandemic EBT and it lives on the Department of Social Services website.

5:08

We have a brand-new FAQ. We did realize that the one that was posted, there previously was the previous round, so I'm sure that created even more confusion, and many apologies um on behalf of our agencies for that, So, the most current information is now available, so, if you were, Fionnuala if you were before, was on the homepage, and then you scroll over to or you look over on the left, the eligibility.

5:32

Once you're on there, that's going to help you answer some of your questions, and Fionnuala if you can scroll down just a little bit, I appreciate it.

5:40

Um it gives a little explanation about how to decipher. You know, a lot of you are operating the Summer Meals programs, either, Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option. A few of you are still operating the CEP or to the traditional NSLP program National School Lunch Program.

5:56

And so, we will give you a couple tips on how kids at the student level are going to be eligible for this program, and where and where we get that data from.

6:05

So then, Fionnuala if you could just scroll down at the very bottom of this eligibility page, the one you'll see this flowchart which helps you determine how the, the, the households who are receiving these benefits are going to receive them in different ways.

6:21

Those who are already receiving benefits through either the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP or the Temporary Family Assistance Program, which is federally known as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, but in our state it's temporary family assistance or TFA, cash assistance.

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6:38

Most of those families have a card that will that those benefits that the Pandemic EBT benefits will be loaded onto.

6:45

If the child receives HUSKY A, and an end is at 185% of the federal poverty level, or lower for their household income.

6:57

Then they will also be eligible for P-EBT benefits, but they will have a card mailed to them.

7:03

That card that gets mailed to them will be mailed to the address that's on file, through their HUSKY application, a little bit complex.

7:13

And then for all of the other children who are eligible and they are not through eligible through snap TFA, or HUSKY, they're eligible through those income eligibility applications for free or reduced price meals.

7:25

Or through virtue of being enrolled in a school, or participating in the community eligibility provision, those children will have the, the P-EBT card mail to them at the address that is on file with the school district.

7:38

So, it's going to be very important that the school district, make sure that, that, at that free and reduced price status and PSIS is up to date current.

7:47

Please continue to, to collect income eligibility applications.

7:51

We know that is a really tricky thing right now, with summer meals, and meals being provided at no cost. It can be really confusing. But we really encourage you to just keep pushing, and keep trying to get those income eligibility applications.

8:05

A lot of households you're serving, that may be newly eligible for free or reduced price meals, but aren't submitting those applications, because you're providing meals at no cost, So it's confusing, but if we don't have that information at the Department of Education, then these children may be losing out on their benefits, so certainly you know, we'll, well, like I said, we'll be sending out some further communications and some encouragement for your school districts to continue getting So the very bottom of this page is the updated frequently asked questions, so I would highly recommend you bookmark that, because you are going to get these questions. We do certainly and that's what that link is so that that is different than what it was before.

8:44

And I hope that you will find it very helpful and a little bit less confusing by when it was the information from the previous round.

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8:51

And again many apologies on that. Um I think that's really what I wanted to review for Pandemic EBT today. I see some questions were submitted.

9:02

One of the things that I neglected to say about questions is if you have questions about any topic you can submit them to us today. You can use the link that we include in our School Lunch Tray to submit them at any time. I like to use the example of when you wake up at 3AM and you have this question, you know, you'll forget. If you don't ask it right then, you can click on that link, and those questions. That link doesn't go bad, so we'll address those at some point. Even if not on today, but if you have questions pertaining to things that are not in our School Lunch Tray for this week, certainly ask those two. We need to know what what's on your mind, what concerns you have, what you're trying to troubleshoot in order for us to provide the best resources, technical assistance, and to you.

9:42

So with that, I really am going to hand it off to my colleague Teri, to talk us through the next section.

9:51

Speaker 2 - Thank you, Shannon. Hi, everyone.

9:54

I get the pleasure of mentioning and making sure that you saw in the School Lunch Tray that Governor Lamont has declared May 7<sup>th</sup> as Connecticut School Nutrition Hero Day woot woot way to go, and I have to compliment Snacked for doing this, this is awesome.

10:13

And they announced it earlier this week and I want to make sure that all the Food Service Directors and managers that are on this webinar understand the importance of May seventh.

10:23

And that if you haven't done so already, make sure that you sent out maybe a mini press release or at least an e-mail to your Superintendents, your Principals, your Teachers, your PTO, to let them know.

10:36

That May seventh is the day, and the School Nutrition Association, is the National Organization, S and ICT is the local chapter, and they have a website that has graphics, and more information, if you're interested, um that you can go to and use, and on the School Lunch Tray.

10:56

Or in this section, those links are provided.

11:00

So make sure that you take time to celebrate this day, not only for yourself, but for your staff, as well, and celebrate all of the wonderful things that you've been doing, because I know you all are working very, very hard.

11:11

So, with that, I am going to turn it over to, I'm not sure who, um Susan Alston. Yeah!

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11:20

Speaker 4 - Hi everyone, I thought it was me. Oh, I think I'm jumping the gun.

11:27

Speaker 1 – Sorry, Sean is up next.

11:36

Speaker 3 - Hi everyone, how's it going, good to be back with you all. I'm really excited to talk to you about you know, the different grant tools we have available. As you might have seen and read here, you would get this new summer enrichment program applications opening up that just opened a few days ago.

11:51

It's a great opportunity. You know, as you can see here, the Governor, you know, is really going to use a lot of this really funding to really try and expand some of the summer programs. And you can see right in our Web page, what you can do with.

12:04

These are competitive grants, there'll be related to expansion innovation, and really, you know, we want to try to engage and have a lot more summer enrichment learning experiences and having those partnerships with local school districts and municipalities.

12:17

You know, with different, you know, really try to leverage this investment, and that's the big piece, There was a webinar, but, you know, Uncorked, fortunately it's passed, But there should be a link on our website soon. Exactly what that was, so you can go back and watch that if you're interested. But people to follow that link below, you can see the applications, the details, and, like I said, the recording of that webinar. Uh that should be posted probably in the next few days.

12:42

I really encourage you to take a look and see if it's an opportunity you'd like to pursue, and I really appreciate your time today.

12:50

And with that, I'll pass it back over to, I think, Susan?

12:54

Speaker 4 - Okay, my turn now and so we just want to bring your attention to um, we revised the form for Authorized Signature Change form that you need to submit if one of your to authorize signers change. So anytime a signer changes, whether your superintendent, um your Business official, whoever's designated as signer one or two, just remember we need this form to be filled out and signed. The form mirrors the previous form, except this time we added, um, it's fillable, so that's great. And you do some of their actual name in there, and the date and their title. But we also ask that you, their e-mail and their phone number. And this makes it very easy for me when I get the forms and process them to be able to set them up in the online system. And one thing we want you to just remember, as you're doing a form of anything, is changing that you'll also want to make sure that you're updating your online application, the sponsor application with those changes in there, so that everything is the same, the same person in the system as number one is going to be on the form. And, and if you haven't done that, I'll remind you um at the time that I'm entering the form.

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14:04

But this will make it very helpful going forward. If you already have a form and progress, so someone, the board has the form, signed it at a meeting yesterday, we don't need you to revise it. So this is just going forward. So that form is on our website, um you can just go under Forms and under A for authorizer signature standard form.

14:27

And that's all for me.

14:36

Speaker 5 - I think I'm up next?

14:43

Hi, everybody. I hope you're doing well today. I just wanted to give you a brief update on some legislation that was signed into law last week. It's the Food Allergy Safety Treatment Education and Research Act known as FASTER. And basically, this uh act now includes sesame in the definition of major food allergens, and major food allergens are required to have food labeling under the Food Allergen Labeling, and Consumer Protection Act of the Food and Drug Administration. So prior to now, sesame has not been one of those major food allergens and effective January 2023 all labels that contain sesame will be required to disclose this information. So this piece of legislation was championed by the Food Allergy Research and Education, which is known as FARE, and in addition to including sesame, it also includes, Fionnuala, if you just scroll down a little bit, we'll see the other information that requires that there's additional research that goes into determining cures for food allergy. So that's a really important step in helping to treat the millions of Americans who have food allergies. And just a brief reminder, that, if you're looking for information on upcoming eating food allergies in school meals, that at the bottom of this blurb in School Lunch Tray, there's a link to our Food Allergy section, on our special diets webpage. And you can just click right in on that link, and you're gonna see a bunch of resources related to food allergies there.

16:25

So that's it for me, and I think I'm turning it over to Fionnuala.

16:40

Speaker 6 - Okay, hi everyone, um, I have a really quick update today, and that is just about our School Lunch Tray Table Talks for May, instead of having that weekly, we are going to move to twice a month. So, that will be May 6<sup>th</sup> and May 20<sup>th</sup> from 2 to 3, it appeared that, that was the best time for our sponsors. So, um that will be happening then, and are on the need for the switches is that SFSP will be kicking off some training and so, as not to inundate you um with two week from us, you will be going to vote twice a week, so, as we'll be covering kind of what goes um out each week, just walking twice, twice a month, um it's one of those days.

17:37

So, my quick update, and now we're moving on to, um, I think this is not me, it's somebody else? Speaker 1 – It's Teri up next. Speaker 2 – It's me. Okay. So, I get the opportunity to talk to you about a grant opportunity.

18:02

And, um, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, better, known as DEEP.

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18:10

And the Recycle CT Foundation are initiating first time ever grant, and it's called the Lee Sawyer Community Waste Reduction and Recycling Grant.

18:19

And, um, it's an honor or in memory of former DEEP, Chief of Staff, Lee Sawyer, who passed away, unfortunately, in October.

18:30

And so, he was very dedicated to DEEP and he also was instrumental in the creation of the Recycling CT Foundation.

18:37

And so, they decided to honor him, and non-profit organizations and municipalities are eligible that schools are on to respond to this grant opportunity. And you can get up to \$15,000. So, it's one thousand to \$15,000, for this grant, there's two categories, and the first category is for waste reduction or re-use projects. And a second category is for recycling or composting projects.

19:05

So if you have school gardens that are going on, you might want to start a composting project and you'd be able to write a proposal and perhaps get this grant.

19:15

The due date is June 30th so you have a little bit of time to put together some information and we just want to make sure that you don't miss out on this information and then this opportunity and you can click on the links to get more detailed information.

19:28

So I'm going to turn it over to, um, Shannon, who is going to be doing Resource Roundup.

19:36

Speaker 1 - Thank you so much, Teri. So as you, as you all can tell, we try to be as approachable as possible.

19:41

We have a great team here, certainly reach out to us, we are clearly in this with you and trying to navigate some of the technological challenges that this day and age bring, so uh thank you so much, and I do just want to kind of reflect back on that May 7<sup>th</sup> School Nutrition Hero Day.

20:00

It's such a big deal that our Governor was able to do that and I was also, you know, looking at next week, as is also teacher appreciation week and it's also School Nutrition Appreciation Week which you saw on that, that, for the blurb about the School Nutrition Hero Day.

20:16

And we all know that education, academic, success, overall, well-being, are hand in hand. So I think it is amazing that both of those weeks are going to be tied together next week.

20:28

And I hope that you do take an opportunity to, to really stop and celebrate all that you have done to make sure that children during this time, in this very strange space we live in, don't lose access to reliable, nutritious, and really amazing meals. And not only that, but you all know your kids,



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you know them so well and that relationship means the world to them. So, thank you for all you do, and for all the teachers out there, for all you do to help support our children and our program.

21:00

So, our Resource Roundup, we typically just choose one item for it, but we had a little help from USDA this time and have 12 items.

21:09

As you saw, the, I'm sure you saw the press release, we, I know we've heard from a lot of you, and the USDA has released, released guidance, or, sorry, released waivers on April 20th. So, it gives us some time to be able to prepare for the next school year.

21:23

Now, some of these waivers are a little bit different than what we've seen and um so we are going to be working with USDA to make sure that we are understanding them correctly.

21:32

We have as Connecticut Opted into all of the 12 waivers, so we will be implementing them.

21:39

The one thing that won't change, is that you need to wait for us to give you the guidance and materials and requirements that we will need from you prior to operating these programs.

21:52

So, some of the nationwide waiver language makes it look like, uh you can just keep going, and we won't need to collect that data from you. But, we do have regulatory obligations that we need to make sure that we are ensuring program integrity and science with the rules and regulations, and with the waiver flexibilities.

22:09

To that end, we have some data that we need to collect from you to make sure we are reporting accurately and that information back to the USDA.

22:18

This is a very interesting time. We are living through, and it is an it's an opportunity. None of us were thought to be able to really look at how our programs run, what works, what could, what could improve.

22:32

And we've had this opportunity through this last year with the pandemic to really look at all of the different flexibilities in how we can continue to create meaningful access with maintaining that program integrity. So, we will be working with USDA to be able to make sure that we are understanding exactly how this can be done in our state. One of the things I like to remind folks but the nationwide waivers is that these have to be a one size fits all for all of the states and all of the territories. So, they won't always just run exactly as you see them written in, in that federal language. That's a tough thing to have to do, that we have to look at this in the context of how we operate programs in Connecticut. What our state and local rules, regulations, and statutes are, um what end to end in order to make these work for you in our state.

23:23

A few of them will have, potentially, an application again, so I can go through that a little bit, but we're not going to be able to answer in-depth questions about this today.

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23:32

But what I do want you to do is submit those questions anyway, because that helps us know where we need to be able to build out those resources and really provide some of that technical assistance. We want to be successful with you and help you through this time.

23:48

The, the first really kind of big thing is that there it's been authorized say that any school food authority will be able to operate the Seamless Summer Option during the school year next year.

24:01

So this, these flexibilities are to create safe, efficient, and socially distance meal service.

24:08

Now, some of you out there who are operating our Summer Food Service program and were able to do that during this past year, early, unanticipated school closures, regulations that will not be an opportunity for next year. So Seamless Summer Option will allow you the flexibility to continue to meet your students where they're learning best. And most safely and well, their well, being able to really maximize that safety and speed of service so that you don't have any of that exposure, that you really limit that exposure.

24:41

And so the Summer Food Service program, because we're going into this next year, looking at these flexible learning models or potentially not having flexible learning models, we all have yet to kind of see how that's going to work out.

24:55

But because it's not an unanticipated school closure, we're not going to be able to authorize summer service program to operate.

25:02

Now, with all of that said, the other thing that is a little bit different in these nationwide waivers from what we've seen in the last few rounds is that these flexibilities should be implemented, entail such a time when greater levels of congregation.

25:18

Um in school settings is safe and healthy. So, we will all figure out what that really means together.

25:26

But what I want you to take away from that is that even though these flexibilities currently exist as you are planning out the next school year, I would highly encourage you to look at if this if this public health emergency finally comes to an end, we may have to go back to operating programs as they have been operating.

25:46

I don't know for sure, if that's how this, how this will work, we're gonna learn a little bit more from, from USDA on how that will work. But I want you to start thinking about that, so that you know, when you're building out your programs and planning for next year, that you really may have, you really may have an opportunity to go back to some sort of congregate meal service, having kids in school and being able to eat together.

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26:10

Um, but until that is a reality for us, we will be able to opt to authorize Seamless Summer Option.

26:16

We will have to develop an application process and an implementation process. So be patient with us as we navigate that and make sure that you have what you need.

26:24

Do your very best to only collect the information that is absolutely necessary and we try very hard not to overwhelm you with what you are required to submit to us.

26:35

I also see a little question mark are popping up and I know I said I would pause between school lunch and Resource Roundup to answer questions, but I guess I was kidding.

26:43

So we're gonna let you keep, keep entering those questions and we'll go ahead and answer those at the end.

26:49

Um, so the other really kind of neat thing is that a lot of you know that the Summer Food Service Program reimbursement level is higher than what it is for the Seamless Summer Option, because the Seamless Summer Option really lives under the National School Lunch Program.

27:04

So it's really an extension of that, so those reimbursement rates are in line with what school breakfast lunch, program reimbursement rates are, the Summer food service Program has, has higher reimbursement rate, but we don't know exactly which of those reimbursement rates are going to be implemented yet, but we will certainly let you know.

27:23

We also know that we will likely have to have some changes to our Child Nutrition Programs online application and claiming system in order to accommodate some of these reimbursement changes.

27:33

Again, be patient will probably be in another little bit of a technology hiccup as we try to figure out how to make our system work for you.

27:40

Um, the other, the next three waivers are what we lovingly referred to as the trifecta, so that is the um non congregate meal service times and the parent guardian pickup. So those are the three that when you have, when you opted into those and are implementing those together, that's what's allowing you to provide, grab and go meals.

28:01

Bulk, bulk meals in bulk sizes, and allow households to be able to pick up on behalf of all of the children in their household, not just the student who is enrolled in that school. Of course, if you're operating closed enrolled, that's a different story. But for, for your traditional open site.

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28:18

Um the next one is, is that flexibility, allowing very specific school meal pattern flexibilities that, as we've done in the past, we will be taking these extremely carefully and very cautiously and looking at it.

28:33

We want to encourage you to as much as possible make sure that you are following the meal patterns, making sure that those kids are getting the healthiest, most nutritious, most balanced meals that you can possibly provide to them.

28:47

Um there will be an application process, you will have to show us how you plan to implement the waiver according to the rules that are set by USDA. And we take this very, very seriously as we do all of these others. So, just know, we haven't developed that yet, but it will likely be similar to how you've had that had an application in the past. But these are a little bit different, so, more on that.

29:10

Um, the next one is really around the Child and Adult Care Food Program meal Pattern, and I'm going to go ahead and skip over that, since we have mostly School Food Authorities on here today with us.

29:19

Another continuation is the waiver of the offer versus serve requirement for high schools, so I'm not going to dive too much deeper into that. It's pretty straightforward for you, service operators.

29:29

The next one is speaking to area eligibility in afterschool programs and for family daycare homes, and so we definitely are going to need some guidance from USDA on that, so more, more coming on that one.

29:42

Um, then the final three are to really create some of those safety measures around the on-site monitoring piece.

29:49

We know a lot of the schools, the childcare centers that we work with, who sponsor these programs, still have rules that they don't let, let anybody from the outside come in, which does make the on-site monitoring really tough.

30:01

I'm also pleased to say that the USDA has approved our plans to do alternate oversight and monitoring for these programs.

30:09

So a lot of you um may have noticed you have not been under Administrative Review this year, and that's because we're really concentrating our resources on providing 1-to-1 tailored, technical assistance, training, resources, and as much guidance as we can provide you.

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30:26

We do still have to monitor, monitor you and review you. And so we will be talking with you a little bit further about what that will look like for this year and into the coming summer and coming year. Hard to believe that it, at the real summer is almost around the corner.

30:41

So that's really all I can tell you right now on the waivers and like setting a word switched our time today to be able to learn a little bit more. The USDA, they're going to talk to us, state agencies, provide that guidance.

30:54

We're very fortunate in the north-east region to be able to have our Food Nutrition service folks, they stay very close communication with us.

31:03

Their hosts, meetings with our state agencies and our partner agencies across the region frequently, And so we're able to really problem solve together. And this is, this is definitely an unprecedented time and we've just not seen our programs run this way. So this has been a, an interesting time.

31:21

But with that, I'm gonna go ahead and open up the questions. And I know my team can see those as well. So a few of them may want to pop back on to help me out here, but I know I can have, I know I can handle the first two.

31:33

So, the first question that we have is that, the families that are husky an eligible, whose name will be on the cards. So this. This is going back to that Pandemic EBT question on who would get the card.

31:46

It's whoever is registered whoever DSS's, DSS has on file as the household. That is with, that, is associated with HUSKYA. HUSKY is a little bit tricky, because it typically goes to whoever is claiming that child on their tax rate.

32:05

That's a little bit different, hard to explain, but if you go onto that that that eligibility site that I showed you over on the DSS Pandemic EBT website and you scroll down to that little flowchart, that's very colorful. That will help you determine where that child's card is going to go.

32:25

And if the, if the chart, if the household has questions, we highly encourage them to call the DSS Benefits Center and ask those questions.

32:32

They'll be able to help them a little bit better. Our, our Department helps provide the information, create the program, but the department that actually issues the benefits as our sister agency at Department of Social Services. So when it comes to those questions, sometimes we have to triage them.

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32:48

The next question is: Are there going to be any equipment grants this year? And I'm so happy you asked that. So, as you know, we have Sean onboard with us. He was talking with you about that first grant opportunity.

32:59

And he is working fast and furiously amongst all of this. While he's trying to ramp up, he's only been on board for a couple of months, but one of the top priorities that we have is to be able to launch another equipment assistance grant.

33:11

So in terms of yet another one, we're not sure we're waiting for a little bit more guidance, but we hope to be able to make that available to you soon. So thank you so much for that question.

33:24

Alright. Are you here, Teri, to help me with this next one?

33:27

Speaker 2 - I don't know, I'm here today, I thought you wanted us to come back on camera, so if you don't, I'll be happy to go off camera, Shannon? Speaker 1 - I would love for you to help with this. So I'm so. This question is, has USDA provided guidance for district, the Operating Summer Meal Program in District who would not normally qualify to operate?

33:47

Speaker 2 - And the answer to that is yes, because they provided the waivers, and we're going to be going on a webinar at two o'clock to find out more details regarding that. And, Jessica, you can certainly reach out to me.

34:00

But right now, we're waiting to get more clarification on it, and how it's going to know, how we're going to send it out to all the sponsors. So, yes, summer meals, it's going to be happening, we just need to figure out how it's going to be happening.

34:14

And we will be providing you with more guidance. Absolutely, thank you. Speaker 7 - Can I jump in to add a little more? Speaker 1 - Absolutely.

34:23

Speaker 7 - So, Jessica, that was part of a previous set of waivers that came out a little bit earlier, than the most recent set of waivers.

34:32

So, if you look at USDA response COVID responses, number 73 through 81, there is an area eligibility waiver included in that set of waivers, And, we have already been, I'm working with USDA to get some clarifications specifically related to your question.

34:50

And, so, the Area Eligibility Waiver will allow us to both continue sites that were operating under that waiver previously, as well as consider new sites, if that becomes necessary, or have been guided that states should prioritize ensuring that meal sites are getting benefits to children in need.

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35:11

If sponsors and, or sites that operated in their previously identified areas during the anticipated school closures, due to COVID 19, are unable to continue operating, we may approve new sponsors or sites to serve children in need in those areas. Um so, that's where it's going to be really helpful to reach out to Teri for specific information. So if you can be ready to identify those locations. So we can assist you in walking through that, that will be very helpful.

35:43

Speaker 1 - That's great. Thank you so much.

35:45

See, this is why I refer to my team as Team Awesome, because they are. So the next question is, when will Colyar be opened for the upload and completion of the 21-22 HFC information?

36:00

Speaker 5 – Yup, that's me. Good timing on that question. We actually, we're just finishing up with the instructions today. We've got a little bit of reviewing to do on them. We're hopeful that, by Tuesday of next week, the system will be open, and we will be sending you an e-mail. Please do not do anything until you get that e-mail. We do not need you to go into the system now. But when you get the e-mail, you'll be able to go in and complete your HFC statement and upload your minutes. And again, we hope that will be Tuesday. We will send you an e-mail notification, and then we'll have a follow-up in next week School Lunch Tray with that information as well.

36:39

Speaker 4 - Um just to jump on, oops sorry, but just to jump on with that. I just want to make sure that, you know, so, even though it will open and be open for HFC, please do not touch anything else. Don't think you're gonna get a jump on next year's application, because that will be open. No, we're not sure what we're going to have you do with that right now because it could be SSO could be NSLP. So anything that you would start don't upload any forms for applications like just don't. Unless it's HFC, so please just don't click on it and, it can be done at a later time.

37:11

Just don't click on anything.

37:16

Speaker 7 - Not only next year, even for summer, for SSO for summer just hold off until we develop the plans for that, for July and August, so.

37:26

When you get the email, its HFC and HFC only nothing else, right? Speaker 1 - And if you touch anything else, well now. And I do, I do appreciate Susan, if you're letting me know on record and on recording that I will be under the gun for making sure that that gets reviewed and out by Tuesday. But it's a good strategy. Alright, thank you guys so much. But, seriously, I'm on our system, It's just the way that our system works, just how it isn't.

37:55

And if you if you touch or mess with areas that we haven't specifically instructed you to do, it creates a very fun time on our end, which will then create a less fun time on your end. So, certainly, just read those instructions. We try to be very specific. We give you screenshots and walk you through it.

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38:15

Make sure you follow those, make sure you follow those, or you reach out, so that we know exactly where you may have gone. But we have a small team, and there's a lot of use, though. Certainly, we want to provide you that one-on-one assistance, but definitely look at what we send you and what, what, we take pictures and send you, and make sure you follow those instructions, that saves everybody some time and definitely stress.

38:39

Um so the next question we have is, Has USDA extended free meals to all students through school year 21-22?

38:46

So that is the essential, the essential, kind of crutch of what these 12 nationwide waivers are letting us do.

38:55

Um, we really have to look at this, very seriously.

38:58

So, Area Eligibility, even though we have the waiver to be able to operate Area Eligibility, it is a very, very serious regulation. And so, we have to be very careful in very particular, and how that's implemented.

39:11

Now, we are still going through these waivers, and we do have some training from USDA coming up. So we hope to be able to answer this more effectively, but yes, that is what it appears is going to be able to be allowable, that whether all of you elect into that, that's going to be a district level decision. And some districts right now are still operating the traditional National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

39:33

So those know that it's going to be at the district level choice, but we will make sure that you understand exactly what those choices are.

39:42

Next question we have is, SFSP can continue as long as we are going into summer once school opens, we can go to SSO?

39:52

Carolina appear, want this one?

39:56

Speaker 7 - So, yes, that is correct. That through the summer, we will be continuing SFSP.

40:03

And that will be ending before the first day of school, we know that. We do not have a process yet on how we're going to help you through that transition. So just keep your ears open. We need to get everyone ready for service in July and August first, but you can start getting mental mentally prepared for the fact that we will be transitioning from SFSP to SSO for the first day of school.



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40:26

Speaker 1 - Thank you.

40:27

Um, so, the next question is, good, hard ball question, can you further clarify who is considered a guardian and if a child can pick up more than one meal?

40:38

So, the USDA has come out pretty strongly on this language, that it must be a parent or guardian who picks up meals on, either behalf of them, they're one child or all the children living in that household.

40:51

Um, if you have particular circumstances that you're wondering is does this fit, that criteria or not? Certainly reach out to your consultant and problem solve with them, that we have the, we have not obtained any other sorts of flexibility from USDA to broaden that definition of guardian.

41:13

Um that said, the definition of guardian is a little bit amorphous for lack of that are additive. That comes to my head. So certainly reach out to us if you have particular circumstances, and we can work with you to make sure that you are following the program regulations and guidance as closely as possible.

41:33

All right, so this one is camps in summer. If we are feeding, you should just stay on Caroline. If we are feeding.

41:45

If we are feeding lunch and breakfast five days a week at a local camp for the summer, we anticipate that some of these kids will have siblings that are not in the camp, and we'll be picking up grab and go meals from our high school, and/or be picking up the meal at the high school for the weekend.

42:02

How do we ensure that these families are not double dipping or getting more meal, getting, exceeding the number the maximum number of meals allowed per child per day? You do not want to have to take names, because we know that that will make a lot of people uncomfortable, and they won't come to pick up.

42:19

So, to answer that or not is up to you. It's a great question to ask, and this is a great time to be asking it, so that you have the time to prepare.

42:29

Speaker 7 - So, first and foremost, I would say, community education is going to be really important for that.

42:34

So, any of the communications that you do, whether it's flyers that are going home, if you're putting little tidbits on your school, your menus that are going out to get families ready for this

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summer, if the district is putting it on the website, you should certainly be advertising. What is allowed for participation in the program for individual child, but in terms of specific work requirements, that is not something that you're gonna get from our office. That's something that you're gonna need to develop at the local level, based on your knowledge of the community that you're serving. And certainly, your consultant can work with you on the specifics of that, um but you're going to be in the best position to make decision about what would work best in your community.

43:21

Speaker 1 - Thank you, alright.

43:23

I have a couple ones that are good. Just tips, so thank you for letting us know. A couple of our links are not working. We will definitely look into that.

43:32

So here's another question.

43:34

You may not know yet, which is probably true, but we will, but will we still be able to provide meals seven days a week?

43:42

So I can take it unless somebody else wants to?

43:48

My team's uncomfortable? Oh, yeah, you go. Speaker 7 - I'm not sure if I'm looking at the question, whether they're referring to this summer or if they're referring to next school year? Um, so, for the Summer, yes, seven days a week are allowed during Operation of Seamless Summer Option and the Summer Food Service Program. So weekend meals are allowed to be honest with you. The biggest barrier to weekend meals is generally the congregate nature of summer meals programs.

44:17

Um, but we do still have the waiver for non congregate meals um and the other two that go along with that, the parent pickup.

44:24

And the mealtime restrictions that will allow you to do grabbing go meals because generally most sponsors don't have operations on the weekend, which is what restricts their participation and weekend meals.

44:34

So I don't think that we have an answer to what that's gonna look like for next school year.

44:39

So if you want to just pause on that for next school year, we will have lots of time to get you that information in advance, um but certainly for this summer, you can plan on weekend meals.

Speaker 1 - And as always, you're going to need to let us know and received prior authorization in order to do that. So certainly don't just go ahead and start serving up to a week without letting us know. We do have to approve you for that, for those school holidays, which now we're pretty much past.

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45:05

We were able to have, to the discretion to be able to allow you to serve for more than one week for that extended time period, but that is really special.

45:16

That is a very special circumstance tied to prolonged breaks from school.

45:23

So, Caroline, this one's for you too. Do we know when the summer food service program apps will open?

45:34

Speaker 7 - No. I was, I was looking for that question. I somehow missed that one.

45:43

So, this question is specific to schools, because that's who's on the call, right now.

45:50

So, we actually have to go through an application process for our SFSP sponsors that are not currently offering and SFSP meals during the school year. So, if you missed this on one of the previous calls, surprise, you've already done the application, which is great news.

46:10

There's going to be around some site application updates and approvals related to what the profile of sites that you're offering now, versus how that might transition for the summertime. We do not have a timeline in place for that yet. So just keep your eyes on our communications. We will provide specific instructions and what we need from you, and the timeframe in which we need it. But although it may not feel like it, you're in really good shape for this coming summer, so feel really good about that.

46:39

Speaker 1 - And you can just take a big marker and check that part right off your to-do list.

46:44

We're just thrilled that we were able to figure out how to be able to streamline that, so that you did not have to submit another round of applications and less than a year. So, um thank you, and really, thank you to our team.

46:57

But we, you know, again, gotta take that, that information, at the site level, very seriously, for the data that we're going to need to collect, so that we can report that back to USDA, and also make sure that you are operating the programs within the boundaries that we are allowed to.

47:13

Alright, so we have a few minutes left. I know we kind of cranes, through that we had so much to cover, but we have so many more adventures ahead of us, both for this summer and for the coming school year.

47:24

So, we look forward to learning and growing with you, and figuring out how are we going to make all of this work for you.

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47:32

We know it's taking a ton of stamina, a ton of fortitude, a lot of flexibility, and you have just done a tremendous job, and our team, just as I, as I like to say often because they can't hear it enough.

47:45

They tirelessly work to make sure that you have the support and the resources you need, and I can't, I wouldn't, I can't be more proud to be part of this team.

47:54

Um I'm not seeing any other questions come in, and you know, I'll just keep babbling unless you submit them. So certainly you get about one more minute of my babbling while I remind you that our program guidance page is extremely helpful. So we work our best to make sure that you can access that information.

48:11

A lot of those materials are developed just for you um to be able to make sure that you have the templates, the tools you need, and you don't have to recreate the wheel. So certainly look for those uh resources if we don't have them. We may be able to develop them, if you can't find them right away, and let us know how you are looking for it. And we might be able to make sure that you are able to find it in the way that makes the most sense to you in the future.

48:35

Um the other thing that they is a really great resource right now is, on our Child Nutrition pages on the Department of Education, we have and by we, I mean, Susan Fiore, who is amazing, has really built out a coven resource page for you to help you operate. And so we're working to make sure that that is really straightforward.

48:55

So you know what applied previously, what applies for this upcoming summer, and what will apply for the school year.

49:03

Just jump in. You have a question, you can submit it and the question.

49:10

Speaker 7 - And so Janet, I see you have copy pasted your question from earlier.

49:15

So I'm not sure if that was intentional or not, but just in the event that it was intentional and you are not clear on the answer. Your question was, has USDA extended free meals to all students through school year 21-22. There has been an extension offered a Seamless Summer option for next school year, which would be meals at no cost to all children.

49:38

Speaker 1 - And just to add onto that, too, just to point out again, that those nationwide waivers are really, although authorized through June 30th of 20-22, it does say in, I think all of the waivers, if not, the majority, at least, that it's really meant to support that school and Child Care Center re opening and that, and this health and safety.

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50:03

And so, at any time, if that is, is not, is no longer needed, then you may not need these flexibilities. So, we're gonna get a little bit more guidance, and we'll make sure that you have additional guidance on that, and what that will mean for you, and how you can help, how you can plan for that.

50:20

Um, but we are all like I said, in this together, but yes, if the district does opt into that, it does look like they will be able to provide those meals at no cost to any Child 18 and younger. But again, that is to help support that school re-opening. So it's very specific to school food authority.

50:41

All right. I think that looks like it, and we know you're all very busy and you have that forever question link, you can certainly find that in all of our School Lunch Trays and submit your questions if you didn't have a chance to do that.

50:54

But with this, we're gonna give you a whole nine minutes back in your day so that you can maybe take a walk in the drizzle of the rain outside. Usually it's um, I mean, it's a spring day, eat outside, but not today.

51:08

So enjoy your day, and I hope you enjoy your weekend, too. And with that, Happy Friday Eve, as I like to say on Thursdays. And thank you so much for joining us for today's School Lunch Tray Table Talk. 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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