

Outlook may not display this message well. To view this email as a web page, click [here](#).



Want a colleague to get a copy of this email? Forward it to them by clicking here.



**INDIANA
DEPARTMENT of
EDUCATION**

**Mike Braun, Governor
Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education**

School Nutrition Programs

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

This weekly newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is dedicated to providing education, training, and technical assistance opportunities to school nutrition professionals, helping to ensure seamless operations for those participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Child Nutrition Programs. If you are the food service contact for your school or facility, please be certain that everyone on your team has access to this important information.

Tip of the Week

Miss A Newsletter?

Bookmark IDOE's [Newsletter Archive webpage](#) to access past School Nutrition Programs newsletter guidance.

Important Updates

Verification is Coming!

Sponsors that process applications for free and reduced meal benefits can find helpful tips to prepare for verification below:

- View the [2026-2027 Verification Method Report](#) to determine what type of verification must be completed. The method is determined based on the non-response rate reported on the Program (PY) 2025-2026 Verification Summary Report.
 - Sponsors with a 20% or higher non-responderate are required to conduct Standard (Error Prone) Verification – this means 3% of the total approved applications on file as of Thursday, October 1, must be pulled from the flagged pool of Error Prone applications.
 - Sponsors with a non-response rate under 20% can choose from any of the three methods available.
- Before Thursday, October 1, maximize your Direct Certification (DC) matches.
 - Conduct DC lookup on any categorical application – applications with a valid-looking case number or the foster box checked.
 - Upload a school roster of any student who hasn't already been direct certified.

- Process any possible matches.
- Attend the following live webinars:
 - Verification Preparation on Thursday, September 24, from 10 to 11 a.m. ET. Click [here](#) to register.
 - Maximizing Direct Certification (repeat session) on Tuesday, September 29, from 10 to 11 a.m. ET. Click [here](#) to register.
 - Verification in Action on Thursday, October 1, from 10 to 11 a.m. ET. Click [here](#) to register.
 - Verification in Action (repeat session) on Thursday, October 15, from 10 to 11 a.m. ET. Click [here](#) to register.
- Bookmark the [Verification webpage](#) to access notification letters, detailed instructions, and quick guides.

Open Comment Period for USDA Direct Final Rule: Simplified Geographic Preference Procurement in Child Nutrition Programs

USDA published a direct final rule last week that clarifies existing guidance about how Child Nutrition Program operators may apply geographic preferences when purchasing local agricultural products. The open comment deadline is Friday, October 9. Click [here](#) to submit a comment. The rule is set to take effect on Monday, November 9. For more information and to read the rule, click [here](#).

Indirect Cost Reminder

This is a reminder that indirect costs must be charged within 90 days of Tuesday, June 30, to the Nonprofit School Food Service Account (NSFSA). Indirect cost for school year (SY) 2025-2026 must be calculated and charged by Monday, September 28. Indirect costs may not be charged retroactively for a previous school year. Public schools may only charge indirect costs to the NSFSA with an approved indirect cost rate. The 2026 approved indirect cost rates used for SY 2025-2026 can be found [here](#). The 2027 approved indirect cost rates used for SY 2026-2027 can be found [here](#).

Non-public sponsors that do not report their financial information to IDOE's Office of School Finance may use the 15% de minimis rate. Sponsors must submit the indirect cost calculation and proof of transfer on the Annual Financial Report (AFR). The indirect cost calculation is as follows:

Indirect Cost = Total Allowable Direct Expenses - (Food Cost + Equipment more than 10K) x Indirect Cost Rate

For questions regarding indirect costs, please contact SCNFinance@doe.in.gov, including your sponsor number in the subject line.

Introducing Food Distribution Program (FDP) Fundamentals Webinar Series

IDOE is pleased to announce the launch of a new Food Distribution webinar series developed to enhance USDA Foods knowledge and deliver essential updates, training, and best practices for School Food Authorities (SFAs). Click [here](#) for session descriptions and details.

Farm to School

Harvest of the Month (HOM)

Next year's HOM calendar is here! Each month features an Indiana-grown product for schools to highlight through taste tests, classroom lessons, cafeteria promotions, and garden activities. The HOM database includes a wide variety of additional resources you can access, such as standardized recipes, Early Care and Education (ECE) to grade 12 lesson plans, media items, and more.

Those who register will receive 12 printed posters (one for each month), while supplies last. All additional materials will be available digitally. Click [here](#) for more details.

USDA Foods

SFAs Food Distribution Accounts Still Pending Submission or Uncertified

There are several schools with food distribution accounts pending submission or uncertified. SFAs can follow the steps below to attain pending approval status.

- Login to [CNPweb](#) and navigate to FDP.
- Read the update and message screen, then scroll to the bottom and click "continue."
- Click "Program Year 2027" in the upper-right corner.
- Go to the applications tab and click the "Edit" link.
- Verify and/or update the address and contact information.
- Ensure that a 24-hour access phone number (such as a mobile phone number) is entered.
- Scroll down to box 29 in the verification section and place a checkmark in the box.
- Click the submit button, and your account should be pending approval.
- IDOE will approve your account if all requirements are met.

If you see the message:

"You do not currently have an NSLP information sheet for Program Year 2027 in a Pending Approval or Approved status. You must complete the enrollment process for the National School Lunch Program before your FDP information sheet can be certified and approved."

Your school still has required tasks to complete in the School Nutrition Program (SNP).

Here's a [refresher course](#) SFAs can watch on demand.

ProcessorLink Training to Indiana School Districts

[ProcessorLink](#) will offer virtual training for Indiana school food authorities (SFAs) to familiarize Indiana school districts with key features and workflows. Participants will learn basic navigation, essential tasks, and best practices to ensure accurate and efficient use of the system. The training is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. ET. Join the webinar using [this link](#).

K12 Foodservice On Target Forecast Planner Virtual Training

For SFAs with processors that report pound and balance information through K12 Foodservice, IDOE is hosting a virtual training for Recipient Agencies (RAs) on Wednesday, October 21, from 10 to 11 a.m. ET. [K12Foodservice.com](#) now offers a commodity planner that helps RAs identify needs, collaborate with partners, and track progress. The K12 On Target Planner provides real-time updates to improve entitlement use. Join the webinar using [this link](#).

Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Order Receipt System (FFAVORS) Access and Ordering

If your school's representative has not completed the [eAuthentication](#) process, and Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) has not set up a FFAVORS account for the user and/or point of contact. The steps below must be completed before any orders can be placed.

1. Have your designated school representative complete the eAuthentication process.
2. After eAuthentication is finished, DLA will create a FFAVORS profile account for the user or point of contact.
3. Wait for confirmation that the FFAVORS login has been created.

4. Once both steps are complete, you may begin placing orders.

DoD Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program

Schools must enter receipts in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Order Receipt System (FFAVORS) **within two calendar days** of delivery to avoid account suspension and ensure that vendors are paid. Schools should monitor and use DoD Fresh funds in FFAVORS to prevent sweeping or loss of funds. Funds must be used in full by June 30, 2027 and will not rollover.

USDA Foods Cancellations for SY 2026-2027

- 100256 Frozen Strawberry Cups (January-September 2026)
 - 100258 Frozen Apple Slices
 - 110721 Sweet Potato Fries
 - 110921 Frozen Chicken Fillet, Unbreaded
-

Did You Know?

RAs play a key role in ensuring USDA Foods are received safely and handled correctly. Here are some ways RAs safeguard USDA Foods:

- RAs should check the delivery against the invoice to make sure all USDA Foods are correct.
 - No matter when the truck arrives, the SFA is responsible for verifying quantities and spotting shortages or overages right away.
 - Even during busy meal times, USDA requires SFAs to inspect refrigerated and frozen items for proper temperature to ensure food safety.
 - SFAs should document any issues immediately, including photos and date codes, even if the delivery timing interrupts regular workflow.
-

USDA Foods Recipe Resources

Looking for recipes to use your USDA Foods? Check out these resources:

- [Nutrition.gov](https://www.nutrition.gov)
- [Smart Swaps Recipes](#)
- [Wild Blueberry Recipes](#)
- [Recipes for Healthy Kids](#)
- [Recipes for Schools - Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#)
- [Team Nutrition Recipes](#)

Procurement

Best Practices for Managing Vendor Relationships and Delivery Expectations

Strong vendor relationships are essential to smooth school food operations, consistent product quality, and reliable deliveries. Building and maintaining those relationships helps SFAs reduce disruptions, improve communication, and ensure students receive safe, high-quality meals. Here are a few best practices to highlight:

- **Establish clear communication channels.** Make sure vendors know who to contact at your SFA for delivery updates, product substitutions, or concerns. Consistent communication prevents surprises and supports timely problem-solving.

- **Set expectations early—and revisit them as needed.** Share your SFA's delivery hours, receiving procedures, product specifications, and USDA Foods requirements. Reinforce these expectations, especially at the start of each school year or contract cycle.
- **Document delivery performance.** Track on-time deliveries, product accuracy, and any recurring issues. This data helps you address concerns early and strengthens your procurement decision-making.
- **Build a collaborative partnership.** Treat vendors as part of your school nutrition team. When challenges arise—like late trucks, staffing shortages, or supply chain disruptions—work together to find solutions that support student meal service.
- **Provide feedback regularly.** Vendors appreciate knowing what's going well and what needs improvement. Clear feedback can help prevent future issues and enhance service consistency.
- **Stay flexible when possible.** While SFAs have firm requirements, a bit of flexibility during unavoidable circumstances (weather delays, shortages, etc.) can strengthen the partnership and support continuity of operations.

For more details on procurement topics, see the [Procurement Information Sheet](#). Questions about procurement? Click [here](#) or contact the [SCN Procurement mailbox](#) for assistance.

Training and Webinar Opportunities

Culinary Skills for A+ School Meals: Fall 2026 Virtual Training Series

Join for free, interactive sessions featuring live chef demonstrations, practical recipes, efficient techniques, and nutritional insights. Each class earns one training hour and includes exciting giveaways!

Enhance your culinary skills and learn tips and tricks from school nutrition pros. Classes are held Thursdays, from 2 to 3 p.m. ET. For more details, click [here](#) to register.

- Thursday, October 1: Harvest to Lunchroom for Indiana Food Day
- Thursday, October 8: Prep Like a Pro: Knife Skills for School Kitchens
- Thursday, October 15: Slice, Dice & Serve: Vegetable Cutting Skills for School Meals
- Thursday, October 22: Mastering Fruit Prep: Cutting Techniques for K12 Foodservice
- Thursday, October 29: Making the Most of USDA Foods in School Kitchens
- Thursday, November 5: Stirring Up Success: Soups Kids Will Love

Questions? Contact [Cathy Powers](#) for additional information.

Speed Scratch Simplified Webinar

Join Chef Sam Cowens Gasbarro and Cathy Powers on Tuesday, September 29, from 2 to 3 p.m. ET for a free, interactive webinar on using core speed-scratch items to boost efficiency and menu flexibility. Learn practical ways to customize student-favorite recipes, add more vegetables and lean proteins, and create a restaurant-style experience in your cafeteria. Click [here](#) to register.

Upcoming Webinars

Check out the upcoming webinar list [here](#), as new events are added regularly. If there is a specific topic you would like to see covered, let us know by filling out [this form](#)!

Farm to School

IDOE, in partnership with the Indiana Grown for Schools Network, hosts and shares several webinars and events to support school nutrition programs. Stay up to date on the upcoming events page [here](#).

- [Farm to School Office Hours](#)- Wednesday, October 7, from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. ET
- [Farm to School Office Hours](#)- Wednesday, November 18, from 4 to 5 p.m. ET

Reminders

Prepare for October Certification Sign-Off

Each year, public and charter school administrators must sign off on data submitted to IDOE for the Pupil Enrollment (PE) Report. This data includes the number of free and reduced eligible students at each school building. These numbers are used to qualify the school for other federal and state funding opportunities, as well as potential grants and programs. School food service administrators may share this data with their data team to ensure accurate numbers are submitted.

Once the school administrator has signed off on the data, no revisions are allowed. For more information, reach out to your school's data specialists.

PY 2026 Annual Financial Report (AFR)

The PY 2026 AFR was due on Friday, September 4. Sponsors that have not completed and submitted the 2026 AFR for approval should do so as soon as possible to avoid a potential hold on claim payments. If additional time is needed, extension requests may be sent to SCNfinance@doe.in.gov.

Breakfast Notification

USDA requires sponsors participating in the School Breakfast Program to provide breakfast service notifications multiple times throughout the year. Each notification should include the breakfast location and serving times. These notifications can be shared through social media, newsletters, TV screens throughout the school, daily announcements, or other communication channels. Sponsors must keep proof of each notification for Administrative Review purposes. Helpful breakfast promotional graphics can be found [here](#).

Nutrition Nugget

An Apple A Day

"An apple a day" is a common phrase and for good reason. Apples can support regular digestion and heart health. September and October are the peak of apple season, and whether they're whole, dried, applesauce or juice - they can be a part of a nutritious school meal.

Gather your school for the Indiana Apple Crunch, and celebrate the "Crunch Heard Around the State" on any day in October. Learn more [here](#).

Updates from Our Partners

National Food Safety Month

September is National Food Safety Month, the National Restaurant Association and ServSafe have launched the 2026 campaign - Recipe for Food Safety. Download the weekly new bundle of resources available at [ServSafe® - National Food Safety Month webpage](#).

Safe by Design: Kitchen Layouts and Equipment Use that Support Food Safety Webinar

Join the Institute of Child Nutrition's "School Meals Live" Series on Thursday, September 24, from 3 to 4 p.m. ET to learn practical strategies for creating kitchen environments that promote safe food handling and improve workflow. Register [here](#).

Celebrate World School Milk Day on Wednesday, September 30

There are nearly 700 dairy farms in the state of Indiana and milk travels from farm to school cafeteria within 48 hours. Hard-working dairy farm families make it possible for schools to have fresh, safe, nutrient-rich milk as part of their meals. Just one carton of milk (whether white or chocolate) provides students with eight grams of high-quality protein.

Learn more about World School Milk Day and access resources and activities, provided by the American Dairy Association of Indiana, [here](#). Feel free to share with your principals, teachers, and others that may be interested. Make sure to tag @indairy when celebrating World School Milk Day on social media.

Upcoming Dates



Date	Event
Tuesday, September 29	Final Due Date for July Claim
Thursday, October 1	Verification Opens
Friday, October 9	Public Comment Deadline
Friday, October 30	Final Due Date for August Claim
Sunday, November 15	Verification Ends



Additional Resources

[School Nutrition Programs Calendar](#)

[IDOE's Nutrition Webpage](#)

[CNPweb](#)

This email was sent by: Indiana Department of Education
100 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, IN, 46204 US

[Privacy Notice](#)

[Manage Preferences](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)