



## 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

#### Direct Certification (DC) Reminder

Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must access the DC report annually. Sponsors using the standard claims process must download a DC match list at least three times per school year, but are encouraged to do so at least monthly. Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools are required to run direct certification at least once each school year, but it is best practice to download DC information more frequently to support students who rely on non-federal programs for fee reductions and program entry and to help calculate Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for future CEP applications.

### Important Updates

#### Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Election Period – Now through Tuesday, June 30

##### Election Period Information:

The CEP election period for the 2026-2027 school year is now open through Tuesday, June 30. Initial determination of eligibility must be made by local school corporations using Direct Certification (DC) and enrollment data collected around Wednesday, April 1. The data must be submitted to the Indiana Department of Education via the CEP worksheet located on the [CEP webpage](#). Once any additional requested information is submitted, a validation process will occur before final approval and the collection of a signed agreement.

##### How CEP Works:

Community eligibility allows high-poverty schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students, ensuring they are well nourished and able to learn throughout the school day.

Under CEP, schools do not collect free and reduced meal applications, instead, the school's meal reimbursement reflects the percentage of its students who are DC for free meals (called "Identified Students"). That percentage is multiplied by 1.6 to determine the share of meals that are reimbursed at the free rate, with the balance reimbursed at the paid rate. For example, a school with 50 percent Identified Students would receive 80 percent (50 X 1.6) of its meal reimbursements at the free rate and 20 percent at the paid rate. Schools must agree to serve both breakfast and lunch every school day to all students free of charge.

##### Minimum Application Requirements:

A school district may implement CEP in any school or group of schools with a minimum of 25 percent or more Identified Students.

Resources such as the [CEP Estimator Tool](#) and [CEP Slider Tool](#) may be helpful in determining the feasibility of CEP implementation and should be used early in the evaluation process.

Additional resources are located on the [CEP webpage](#). For more information, contact your assigned school nutrition programs field specialist.

#### 2026 Appropriations Act: Impact on Child Nutrition Programs

On Tuesday, March 24, USDA released policy memo [SP 05-2026](#), outlining how the 2026 Appropriations Act impacts Child Nutrition Programs. In accordance with the 2026 Appropriations Act, School Food Authorities (SFAs) operating the School Breakfast Program (SBP) are now allowed to credit any vegetable offered in place of a fruit with no subgroup requirements. Additionally, SFAs are not allowed to purchase raw or processed poultry or seafood products imported from the People's Republic of China. SP 05-2026 also outlines new guidance that only requires SFAs with a negative balance in their nonprofit foodservice account (as of June 30, 2025) to increase prices per the Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) rule. For more information and to view policy memo SP 05-2026, click [here](#).

#### Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Crediting Handbook

The revised [Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CACFP) is now available online! The handbook was recently revised to make the guidance clear and consistent, add new crediting examples, and make updates to match current policy. This updated resource will help CACFP operators serve meals and snacks that encourage healthy choices, healthy families, and healthy outcomes. The handbook works with the [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) to help with crediting foods and planning meals. It also provides information on the current CACFP meal patterns, crediting guidance for each meal component, a "Crediting in Action" section to practice crediting skills, as well as a list of helpful resources.

### Farm to School

#### Food Day Registration Now Open

We are excited to announce that we will be celebrating tomatoes for Indiana Food Day 2026! We pick the item; you pick how and when you celebrate. Indiana Grown for Schools will release toolkits helping operators learn how to grow, purchase locally, and teach about tomatoes. Food Day is a great opportunity to collaborate across departments to help your students get a well-rounded education in all things tomatoes. Trying to figure out how to celebrate? Watch the recording of our kick-off webinar [here](#). Register [here](#) today to get your free seeds in time for the 2026 growing season.

#### Composting and Compost Education in Schools

Interested in learning more about compost and how your schools might take steps towards teaching kids about a circular food system? Join us for our upcoming webinar, Composting and Compost Education in Schools, on Thursday, April 9, from 4 to 5 p.m. ET. We will be joined by the founder and executive director of Let's Go Compost, a national organization helping schools expand composting education, as well as Gowri Somasundaram, board president of the Indiana Composting Council. They will discuss the basics of composting in schools, available resources, and Indiana-specific regulations and grants for composting programs. Bring your questions and your food scraps for a fun and educational experience that will help our schools be better equipped for composting initiatives. Register today, [here](#).

### USDA Foods

#### The End of the School Year is Near

The end of the school year is just around the corner. Now is the time to review your school's USDA Foods inventory and place orders to have them delivered to your school.

- Check direct delivered inventory at the state assigned warehouse listed in [CNPweb](#), the processing companies for bulk pounds by accessing the commodity tracking websites, [K12 Foodservice](#) and [ProcessorLink](#) and utilizing Department of Defense (DoD) funds available in [Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Order Receipt System \(FFAVORS\)](#).
- Direct delivered and Department of Defense Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program (DoD Fresh) funds remaining after Tuesday, June 30, will not roll over to school year 2026-2027.
- Processor pounds remaining after Tuesday, June 30, carryover to school year 2026-2027.
- Allocations for direct delivered USDA Foods end Thursday, April 30. Direct Delivered USDA Foods deliveries to schools end on or before Tuesday, June 30.

#### USDA Foods Cancellations for SY 2025-2026

100124 Turkey Chilled - Bulk (March 2026)  
100256 Frozen Strawberry Cups (January - September 2026)  
100309 Canned Carrots (Entire School Year)  
111900 Turkey Breast Deli (January - June 2026)

#### USDA Foods Recipe Ideas

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

- [Wild Blueberry Recipes](#)
- [Recipes for Healthy Kids](#)
- [Recipes for Schools - Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#)
- [Team Nutrition Recipes](#)

### Procurement

#### Procurement Information

Do you have questions about procurement click [here](#) or contact the [SCN Procurement mailbox](#) for assistance.

### Training and Webinar Opportunities

#### Seamless Summer Option (SSO) Information Session

The SSO is a summer meals solution that is a continuation of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs with the ability to serve meals in school buildings as well as at community sites. It is important to note that the SSO is a separate program from the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the programs cannot operate simultaneously. Sponsors who plan to or have already been approved to operate the SSO in summer 2026 are requested to join us for this webinar on **Wednesday, April 15 from 2 to 3 p.m. ET** to review the SSO program requirements and expectations. Click [here](#) to register.

#### Spring Webinars

Check out our upcoming webinar list [here](#), as new events are added regularly. Three new webinars are scheduled for April. Click the links below for more details and to register.

- [Local Wellness Policies](#) - Thursday, April 16, from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. ET
- [Preparation for the Annual Financial Report](#) - Tuesday, April 21, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. ET
- [Direct Certification for the Community Eligibility Provision Application](#) - Thursday, April 23, from 10 to 11 a.m. ET

If there is a specific topic you would like to see covered, let us know by filling out [this form!](#)

### Reminders

#### USDA School Food Authority (SFA) 2025-2026 National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Survey

SFAs should have received a survey from [USDA-FNS-SFASurvey@gemalserver.com](#) on Monday, March 30, which seeks to collect critical information on current challenges faced by SFAs, including those related to school food procurement and program administration. Please be sure to respond to this survey and take advantage of this opportunity to share your experiences from this school year and communicate your community's specific issues directly to Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). Your input is vital to improve FNS support. If you have any questions about this survey, please email the FNS survey team at [CNSurveys@usda.gov](#).

#### Culinary Skills for A+ School Meals Registration is Open

School nutrition standards require SFAs to offer more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. At the same time, students demand tastier, fresher, and more contemporary menu items. To help SFAs meet these expectations and expand their menus with new, exciting, and compliant items, IDOE is bringing back the Culinary Skills for A+ School Meals workshops. These hands-on classes focus on basic culinary skills needed to prepare and serve high-quality and flavorful meals that meet today's student preferences and align with School Nutrition Program standards.

This training is a five-day workshop that is offered at several locations across the state. For more information and to register for this FREE training, click [here](#).

### Updates from Our Partners

#### Celebrate School Lunch Hero Day on Friday, May 1

School Lunch Hero Day is approaching! This day is a celebration of the dedication, care, and effort school nutrition professionals put into their work each day. Join the School Nutrition Association (SNA) and schools across the country in recognizing these heroes who work to nourish and support their students daily. Learn more about School Lunch Hero Day and find related resources from the School Nutrition Association [here](#).

#### No Kid Hungry's Webinar on Maximizing the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Join No Kid Hungry on Wednesday, April 8, at 1p.m. ET for the webinar, Maximizing CEP: Strategies, Benefits, and What to Attend for the Year Ahead. This webinar will help strengthen your understanding of CEP and provide insight on maximizing its impact. Attendees can expect to learn strategies to increase Identified Student Percentage (ISP) through direct certification, how to use the CEP calculator, and get questions answered during a live Q&A. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

### Upcoming Dates



Wednesday, April 1	<a href="#">Final Due Date for January 2026 Claims</a>
Friday, April 3	<a href="#">2025-2027 Food Service Provider Survey Due</a>
Friday, April 17	<a href="#">FFVP Applications for SY 26-27 Due</a>
Wednesday, April 29	<a href="#">Final Due Date for February Claim</a>
Thursday, April 30	<a href="#">Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Application Due</a>



### Additional Resources

School Nutrition Programs Calendar  
IDOE's Nutrition Webpage  
CNPweb