



School Nutrition Programs

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

Field Trip Meals

- Meal Pattern:** Meals sent on field trips must meet the meal pattern requirements. Each component, including milk, must be provided in the daily minimum serving size. Field trip meals must be documented on the daily production record.
- Meal Counting and Claiming:** Meals must be counted at the point of service. Students can go through the line before the regular meal service time to pick up their meal and be counted. If students do not pick up the meal before leaving, field trip staff must send complete meals and complete a meal count sheet.
- Field trip staff who count meals should be trained on correct meal count procedures including civil rights.
- If not operating Offer versus Serve (OVS), all components must be taken before the meal is counted for reimbursement.

For more information, view a field trip meals fact sheet [here](#) and contact your assigned field specialist with any questions.

Important Updates

Ramadan Meal Service Waiver

USDA approved IDOE's [waiver request](#), allowing program operators to seek approval to serve meals in a non-congregate setting to children at schools operating the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program who are fasting in observance of Ramadan. The waiver is effective from February 27, 2025, through March 31, 2025, though SFAs and sponsoring organizations may only operate non-congregate meal service during their local observance of Ramadan. Under the waiver approval, IDOE's local program operators may offer meals for participants to consume in a non-congregate setting, adjust the time of meal service, and serve meals in high schools without using offer versus serve during Ramadan in 2025. Contact your assigned field specialist for more information.

FDA Declares Coconut No Longer Considered A Tree Nut as Major Food Allergen

On January 6, 2025, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a guidance document titled: [Final Guidance for Industry: Questions and Answers Regarding Food Allergens, Including the Food Allergen Labeling Requirements of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act \(Edition 5\)](#). The document provides a table of tree nuts (page 15) that the FDA considers major food allergens. Coconut is not on this list. The FDA further clarifies that because coconut is not a tree nut, it should not be included in the "Contains" statement on food packaging. Sponsors that have students with a tree nut allergy should check with the student and parents/guardians prior to serving foods containing coconut as the student may have an allergy to coconut. Contact [Margo Birk](#) with additional questions.

Application for Indirect Cost Rate FY 2026 Now Available

IDOE's Office of School Finance has opened the Indirect Cost Rate application, which is due by Monday, March 31. Local educational agencies (LEAs), including school corporations and charter schools, that provided Form 9 financial information for FY 2024 are eligible to apply for a restricted and unrestricted indirect cost rate for FY 2026. New charter schools are eligible to apply but will be subject to the median rate. The application process is available on the Form 9 dashboard located within IDOE's [LINK Portal](#). The Office of School Finance cannot calculate an unrestricted indirect cost rate for private or non-public school corporations because there is not a source of data being reported to, and the School Nutrition program area can no longer approve indirect cost reimbursements for the non-profit school food service account. Contact icr@doe.in.gov with any questions.

National School Breakfast Week (NSBW) is Coming

NSBW will take place from Monday, March 3, through Friday, March 7. This week is a celebration of the importance of a nutritious school breakfast in fueling students for success. This special observance during the first week of March celebrates the national School Breakfast Program and the many ways it gives kids a great start every day. This year's theme is Clue In to School Breakfast. View promotional materials and other resources on the [School Nutrition Association NSBW website](#).

NSBW Complimentary Webinars

- Building Better Breakfasts Culinary Training:** A healthy, protein-rich breakfast is the smart way to start the day, but reducing added sugar can be challenging for school nutrition programs. This webinar will showcase versatile recipes that pack in the protein, while reducing added sugar! Join us Wednesday, March 5, at 2 p.m. ET for live chef demonstrations of practical recipes, efficient techniques and important nutritional insights. This training is sponsored by the American Dairy Association of Indiana and the United Dairy Industry of Michigan. Register [here](#).
- Reducing Added Sugars at Breakfast:** Per the 2024 final rule, [Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines](#), product-based limits for added sugar will be effective July 1, 2025, for breakfast cereal, yogurt, and flavored milk. Join us to learn about the requirements for limiting added sugar at breakfast, how to determine added sugars in products, and tips for reducing added sugars. Thursday, March 6, at 10 a.m. ET. Register [here](#).
- Virtual Culinary Skills for A+ School Meals:** Rise and Dine: Discovering Global Breakfast Flavors Thursday, March 6, at 2 p.m. ET. Register [here](#).

The Urban School Food Alliance (USFA) Survey

USFA, as part of a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is distributing a [survey](#) to gather feedback on challenges and training opportunities around school food procurement (the process by which school districts purchase food, equipment, supplies, and services all related to child nutrition programs). The anonymous survey will take approximately 10 minutes and will close on Wednesday, February 26. You will also have the chance to enter a drawing to attend a school food culinary training at the Culinary Institute of America. Take the survey [here](#).

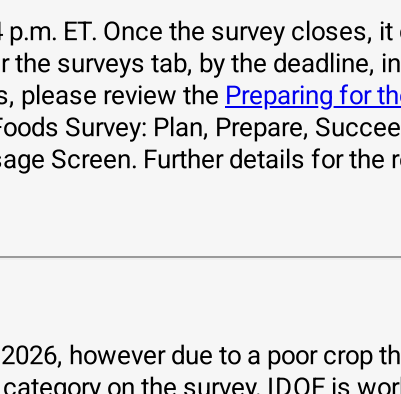
Farm to School

Food Day Update

The food day item for 2025 is corn! After 10 years of Indiana Food Day celebration, this Hoosier staple has never been selected. Food Day is a promotional event that focuses on a different food item every year. We pick the product; you pick the day to celebrate. Join us this year for a corny celebration! More information, including a toolkit and registration link to get seeds, stickers, and more, will be forthcoming.

Farm to School Highlights

Warrick County School Corporation purchased its first Flex Farm Hydroponic system. The agriculture classes at Boonville High School now use and learn from the hydroponic system. They have started to grow lettuce and fresh herbs for the cafeteria to use in their salads, homemade pizzas, and pasta. This year, they are trying tomatoes and other fruiting plants. Connecting students with their food is important and helps them gain a better understanding and appreciation of the nutrients in their food!



USDA Foods

USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey

The USDA Foods Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey will close on Friday, March 7, at 4 p.m. ET. Once the survey closes, it cannot be reopened. School food authorities (SFAs) must complete the survey in [CNPweb](#) under the surveys tab, by the deadline, in order to receive USDA Foods for school year 2025-2026. For useful information and resources, please review the [Preparing for the Annual Pre-Order Forecast Survey guidance](#). A recording of the Maximize and Master the USDA Foods Survey: Plan, Prepare, Succeed webinar will be posted soon on the Food Distribution Program webpage and the Update and Message Screen. Further details for the recording will be available in this newsletter.

OJ Singles Removed from USDA Foods Forecast Survey

OJ Singles 100277 have been listed on the USDA Foods Survey for school year 2025-2026, however due to a poor crop this item will not be available until further notice. Please remove all entries for this item under the fruit category on the survey. IDOE is working to have the item removed from the survey entirely.

USDA Foods Survey Training Recording Available Soon

A recording of the USDA Foods Survey Training webinar, Maximize and Master the USDA Foods Survey: Plan, Prepare, Succeed will soon be posted in CNPweb. Notification of the posting will be announced in this newsletter and the "Update" and "Message" screen in CNPweb.

USDA Foods and DoD Fresh Orders and Deliveries

Schools should begin preparing for the end of the school year. Allocations end on Wednesday, April 30. USDA Foods deliveries (based on delivery periods), USDA Foods for Processing, and DoD orders end Monday, June 30. Schools should make plans for ordering and utilization. USDA Foods for Processing pounds remaining will carry over to school year 2026 depending on usage and availability. DoD Fresh funds will not carry over.

Receipt Deadline Has Changed in FFAVORS

USDA has changed the deadline for schools to receipt DoD produce receipts into the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Order Receipt System (FFAVORS) has changed to two calendar days after the produce delivery instead of the original five day deadline.

USDA Foods Recipes

Use your USDA Foods [canned](#) or [frozen](#) apple slices to prepare this variation of [apple and beet baked oatmeal](#). This recipe must be adjusted to meet serving sizes and meal patterns



Training and Webinar Opportunities

Upcoming Live Webinar Trainings

Learn more and register [here](#) for the training sessions below.

- After School Snack Program (ASSP) Operations Webinar:** Tuesday, February 18, at 2 p.m. ET

Culinary Skills for A+ School Meals

Virtual culinary skills workshops are back! View the current line up of sessions, which begin Thursday, February 13, and register [here](#).

In-Person Meal Pattern and OVS Training

IDOE is excited to offer in-person training on breakfast and lunch meal patterns and OVS. This training is geared toward menu planners, but all staff who would benefit are welcome. Attendees must register in advance. Sessions will be repeated, so please select the date and time that best meets your needs.

- [Tuesday, February 25, from 1 to 3 p.m. ET at MSD of Decatur Township School for Excellence](#)
- [Thursday, February 27, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. ET at Noblesville Schools Educational Services Center](#)

Reminders

USDA Studies

SFAs are encouraged to participate in the following studies conducted by USDA:

- National School Foods Study-** USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) sent the 2024-2025 National School Foods Study, conducted by Mathematica, to selected schools. Those invited to participate are encouraged to submit the requested information. This important study will collect updated information from states, SFAs, schools, parents, and children on school meal programs. This data has not been collected in over a decade and is critical to informing current and future program and policy decisions, affecting your schools and student lunches. Please complete the survey by the deadline listed on the original email notification. For more information about the study, click [here](#).
- Supply Chain Disruption and Student Participation-** USDA FNS is conducting the 2024-2025 SFA survey on supply chain disruption and student participation, a web survey of all SFAs that operate Child Nutrition Programs. Like prior, similar surveys, the survey seeks to collect information on key challenges SFAs are currently facing, including those related to school food procurement, program administration, and program finances. FNS has contracted with Decision Information Resources, Inc. (DIR) to conduct the survey with all public, charter, and private SFAs nationwide. The survey was e-mailed to SFAs on Monday, January 27, and came from noreply@gemailservers.com.

Nominations for the School Food Service Employee of the Year Due Thursday, February 27

Help IDOE recognize school food service employees who contribute significantly to the health and learning capabilities of students by nominating them for IDOE's 2025 School Food Service Employee of the Year Award. This award was created to recognize the outstanding achievements of school food service employees who excel in the areas of customer service, attitude, professionalism, and teamwork. All school food service personnel except Food Service Directors are eligible to be nominated. Submit your [nomination](#) by Thursday, February 27. Contact [Suzette Hartmann](#) with any questions.

IDOE Encourages Participation in Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

SFSP is designed to fill the nutritional gap during summer months when school is out of session and food insecurity is often at the highest level. SFSP provides a way to retain food service staff during the summer and helps to support the food service budget, as reimbursement [rates](#) for SFSP meals are higher than during the school year. As sponsors of child nutrition programs who serve children throughout the school year, local educational agencies make good candidates for summer meal program sponsorship. The two primary ways to qualify for the SFSP sponsorship are by using the school's free and reduced meal eligibility data or the U.S. Census block [data](#). Sponsors that meet the qualification requirements and are located in rural counties as determined per USDA Rural Designation [mapper](#) may qualify for rural non-congregate (RNC) meal service in areas where there is currently no congregate meal sites. The RNC option allows SFSP/SSO sponsors to distribute meals using either meal pick-up or home delivery method. SFSP application is scheduled to open in the CNPweb in March and there is a streamlined process for current child nutrition sponsors. For more information, contact your field specialist or summermeals@doe.in.gov.

Updates from Our Partners

Indiana Association of School Business Officials (IASBO) School Nutrition Seminar

IASBO is hosting a School Nutrition Seminar on Wednesday, March 19, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Embassy Suites in Plainfield. The [agenda](#) includes 4.75 hours of professional standards training hours. Participants do not have to be members of IASBO to attend. Find more information and register [here](#).

Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership at the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN)

ICN is hosting Introduction to School Nutrition Leadership (ISNL) at their location on the campus of the University of Mississippi. The training will be three days of in-person, instructor lead sessions Monday, March 10, through Wednesday March 12, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. local time with additional self-paced online course work. The training is free to attend, but travel and accommodation costs are the responsibility of the participant. Learn more and register [here](#).



Tuesday, February 18, at 2 p.m. ET	ASSP Operations webinar
Tuesday, February 25, at 1 p.m. ET	Meal Pattern and OVS in-person training at MSD Decatur Township
Thursday, February 27	Nominations due for School Food Service Employee of the Year
Thursday, February 27, at 1 p.m. ET	Meal Pattern and OVS in-person training at Noblesville Schools
Monday, March 3, through Friday, March 7	National School Breakfast Week
Wednesday, March 5, at 2 p.m. ET	Building Better Breakfasts Culinary webinar
Thursday, March 6, at 10 a.m. ET	Reducing Sugars and Breakfast webinar
Thursday, March 6, at 2 p.m. ET	Rise and Dine: Discovering Global Breakfast Flavors
Wednesday, March 19	IASBO School Nutrition Seminar

