



Overview of Meal Pattern Changes for the School Nutrition Programs

School Year 2025-26 and Beyond

CONNECTICUT Education
Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs

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Topics

- Reminder about changes for current school year
- Meal pattern changes for school years 2025-26 and 2027-28
- Accepting medical statements for children with disabilities
- Resources



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Housekeeping

- Ask questions
 - Add to chat anytime
 - Raise your hand during question breaks
- Webinar and handout will be posted
 - Will announce in School Lunch Tray



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Introduction to Final Rule



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USDA Final Rule: April 25, 2024

- Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans



<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for-americans>

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Purpose of USDA Final Rule

- Finalizes long-term school nutrition requirements to ensure more nutritious and appealing meals
- Based on goals of 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans



USDA took a multi-step approach to supporting schools to give kids the best chance at a healthy future.

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Final Rule Changes Include

- Meal patterns for grades K-12 and preschool
- Buy American requirement
- Professional standards
- Geographic preference
- Smart Snacks nutrition standards



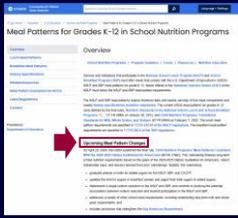
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CSDE Resource

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs

- Upcoming Meal Pattern Changes



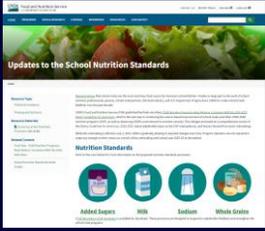
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs#Upcoming_Meal_Pattern_Changes

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USDA Webpage

Updates to the School Nutrition Standards



<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/school-nutrition-standards-updates>

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Final Rule Changes Meal Patterns for K-12 and Preschool

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of NSLP



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Meal Pattern Terminology Changes to Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs (Effective July 1, 2024)



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Terminology Updates Apply to All Child Nutrition Programs

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of NSLP
- Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of NSLP
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)



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Terminology Updates for Meal Patterns

Old	New as of July 1, 2024
Food component	Meal component
Legumes	Beans, peas and lentils



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Changes to NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

School Year 2024-25 (Effective July 1, 2024)



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Two Breakfast Menu Planning Flexibilities

1. Combined grains and meats/meat alternates (MMA) component
2. Vegetable substitutions



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Combined Grains and MMA Component at Breakfast

- Replaces previous grains component
 - ≥ 1 ounce equivalent (oz eq) grain before MMA substitution
- Breakfast menus may offer
 - 1 oz eq of grains
 - 1 oz eq of MMA
 - 1 oz eq combination of both



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Vegetable Substitutions at Breakfast

Through June 30, 2025

- May substitute any vegetables for fruits component

Effective July 1, 2025

- 1 day per week: Any vegetables
- ≥ 2 days per week: ≥ 2 different subgroups



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Vegetable Subgroups in the National School Lunch Program



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/vegetable_subgroups_nslp.pdf

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Counting Beans, Peas, and Lentils at Lunch

- **New weekly flexibility**
 - If offer as MMA component, may also count toward weekly vegetable subgroup requirement
- **No change to daily requirement**
 - May credit as MMA or vegetables but not both in same meal



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Example of Counting Beans, Peas, and Lentils at Lunch

Grades 9-12

- Daily MMA requirement = 2 oz eq
- Weekly requirement for beans, peas, and lentils vegetable subgroup = ½ cup

High School Lunch Menu

- Chili (½ cup kidney beans)
- Whole-grain cornbread
- Garden salad
- Orange slices
- Milk variety



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Crediting Nuts and Seeds at Lunch

- **Credit as full MMA component**
 - Removes previous 50% crediting limit



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Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the School Nutrition Programs



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_nuts_seeds_snp.pdf

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Weekly Dietary Specifications for Lunch and Breakfast

- **Removes synthetic trans fat restriction**
 - NSLP and SBP meals
 - Smart Snacks nutrition standards
- **Food and Drug Administration (FDA) no longer allows synthetic trans fat in U.S. food supply**



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Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons

- **Updates vitamins A and D units per cup to align with FDA's labeling requirements**



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Changes to Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes

Nutrient	Old	New as of July 1, 2024
Vitamin A	500 international units (IUs)	150 micrograms (mcg) retinol activity equivalents (RAE)
Vitamin D	100 IUs	2.5 mcg



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Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-Disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/milk_substitutes_snp.pdf

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Changes to Preschool Meal Patterns

School Year 2024-25 (Effective July 1, 2024)

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Quantities for Meats/Meat Alternates Component

- Change from ounces to oz eq
- Does not affect required meal pattern portions



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Crediting Nuts and Seeds at Lunch

- Credit as full MMA component
 - Removes previous 50% crediting limit

Same as NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12



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Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons

- Updates vitamins A and D units per cup to align with Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labeling requirements

Same as meal patterns for grades K-12



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Changes to Meal Patterns for Grades K-12
School Year 2025-26
(Effective July 1, 2025)

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New Product-based Limits for Added Sugars

- Flavored milk
- Breakfast cereals
- Yogurt



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Added Sugars Limit for Flavored Milk

- School meals ≤ 10 grams per 8 fluid ounces
- Competitive food in middle and high schools ≤ 15 grams per 12 fluid ounces



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Added Sugars Limit for Breakfast Cereals

Ready-to-eat and Cooked

- ≤ 6 grams per dry ounce



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Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

- Expires June 30, 2025
- New combined resource effective July 1, 2025



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/crediting/credit_cereals_snp_grades_k-12.pdf

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Added Sugars Limit for Yogurt and Soy Yogurt

- ≤ 12 grams per 6 ounces
 - ≤ 2 grams per ounce



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Crediting Yogurt in the Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs

- Expires June 30, 2025
- New combined resource effective July 1, 2025



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_yogurt_snp_grades_k-12.pdf

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Changes to Preschool Meal Patterns

School Year 2025-26
(Effective July 1, 2025)

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Change to Limits for Added Sugars

- Breakfast cereals
- Yogurt and soy yogurt

Same as NSLP/SBP meal patterns for grades K-12



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Change to Sugars Limit for Breakfast Cereals

Ready-to-eat and Cooked

Current	New for July 1, 2025
≤ 6 grams total sugars per dry ounce	≤ 6 grams added sugars per dry ounce



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Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

- Expires June 30, 2025
- New combined resource effective July 1, 2025



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_cereals_snp_preschool.pdf

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Change to Sugars Limit for Yogurt and Soy Yogurt

Current	New for July 1, 2025
≤ 12 grams total sugars per ounce	≤ 12 grams added sugars per ounce



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Crediting Yogurt in the Preschool Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs

- Expires June 30, 2025
- New combined resource effective July 1, 2025



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/crediting/credit_yogurt_snp_preschool.pdf

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Changes to ASP Meal Pattern for Grades K-12

School Year 2025-26
(Effective July 1, 2025)

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Save the Date: CSDE ASP Training on May 15, 2025

- Meal Pattern and Implementation Updates for the Afterschool Snack Program for School Year 2025-26
- 2:00-4:00 PM



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Terminology Updates for ASP

Old	New as of July 1, 2024
Meal supplements	Afterschool snacks



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Terminology Updates for ASP

- Revises definition of "child" to clarify that children who are age 18 and under at start of school year may receive reimbursable NSLP snacks



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Changes to ASP Meal Pattern for Grades K-12

- Aligns with CACFP snack meal pattern for children, except two additional NSLP/SBP requirements apply
 - NSLP/SBP weekly juice limit
 - NSLP/SBP weekly whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement



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Number of Meal Components

- 5 instead of 4
 - Milk
 - Vegetables
 - Fruits
 - Meat/meat alternates
 - Grains
- Reimbursable snacks = any 2 meal components



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Changes to Vegetables and Fruits



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One Component Changes to Two Separate Components

Current

- Vegetables/fruits component

New

- Vegetables component
- Fruits component



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Current ASP Meal Pattern (Through June 30, 2025)

- Not reimbursable



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup

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New ASP Meal Pattern (Effective July 1, 2025)

- Reimbursable



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup

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New Weekly Juice Limit

- Cannot exceed half (50%) of weekly fruits and vegetables



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Consistent Crediting with Lunch/Breakfast

- Raw leafy greens credit as half volume served
- Dried fruits credit as twice volume served



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Changes to Meats and Meat Alternates



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Quantities for Meats/Meat Alternates Component

- Change from ounces to oz eq
- Does not affect required meal pattern portions



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New Added Sugars Limit for Yogurt and Soy Yogurt

- ≤ 12 grams per 6 ounces
 - ≤ 2 grams per ounce

Same as NSLP/SBP meal patterns for grades K-12



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Changes to Milk



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New Added Sugars Limit for Flavored Milk

- Snacks
 - ≤ 10 grams per 8 fluid ounces
- Competitive food in middle and high schools
 - ≤ 15 grams per 12 fluid ounces

Same as NSLP/SBP meal patterns for grades K-12



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Changes to Grains



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Component Name and Quantities

- Grains/breads component changes to grains component
- Servings change to oz eq

Same as NSLP/SBP meal patterns for grades K-12



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New Weekly Whole Grain-rich (WGR) Requirement

- ≥ 80% of weekly grains must be WGR
- Based on oz eq of offered grains
- Use same NSLP/SBP WGR criteria



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New Limit for Added Sugars in Breakfast Cereals

- ≤ 6 grams per dry ounce

Same as NSLP/SBP meal patterns for grades K-12



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No Grain-based Desserts

- Cannot credit



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Examples of Grain-based Desserts

- Brownies, plain
- Cakes, e.g., coffee cake, cupcakes, gingerbread
- Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars
- Cookies
- Doughnuts
- Fruit-filled buns and bars
- Dessert pies, fruit cobblers, fruit crisps, fruit turnovers
- Pastries, e.g., sweet rolls, cinnamon rolls, danish, toaster pastries

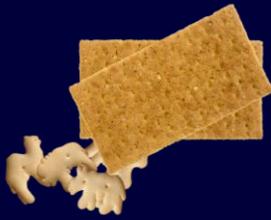


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Animal Crackers and Graham Crackers

- Not grain-based desserts
- Recommended limit ≤ 2 times per week



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Changes to NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

School Year 2027-28 (Effective July 1, 2027)



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Changes to Weekly Dietary Specifications

Apply to

- NSLP meal patterns for grades K-12
- SBP meal patterns for grades K-12

Do not apply to

- Preschool meal patterns
- ASP meal pattern for grades K-12



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Dietary Specifications

The USDA's nutrition standards for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12

- Apply to school meals as averaged over the week



Terms to Know

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Two New Weekly Dietary Specifications

1. Additional sodium reductions
2. New limit for added sugars



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Lunch Sodium Reductions from Current Levels

Grades	Current sodium limit (Target 1A) through June 30, 2027	Sodium limit by July 1, 2027
K-5	$\leq 1,110$ mg	≤ 935 mg
6-8	$\leq 1,225$ mg	$\leq 1,035$ mg
9-12	≤ 1280 mg	$\leq 1,080$ mg

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Breakfast Sodium Reductions from Current Levels

Grades	Current sodium limit (Target 1) through June 30, 2027	Sodium limit by July 1, 2027
K-5	≤ 540 mg	≤ 485mg
6-8	≤ 600 mg	≤ 535mg
9-12	≤ 640 mg	≤ 570 mg

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New Weekly Limit for Added Sugars

- ≤ 10% of calories per week
- Applies in addition to product-based limits
 - Flavored milk
 - Breakfast cereals
 - Yogurt



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Plan Now to Meet Limits for Sodium and Added Sugars

- Review current menu items
- Identify new menu items to substitute
- Write purchasing specifications



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Guide to the Dietary Specifications for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/mpg/guide_dietary_specifications_nsp_sbp_k12.pdf

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What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12



- Module 5: Dietary specifications

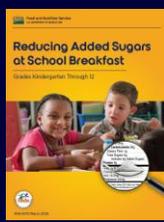
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

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USDA Resource

Reducing Added Sugars at School Breakfast



<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/sbp/reducing-added-sugars>

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Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) Resource

Shaking It Up: Small Changes Lead to Big Flavors



<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/shaking-it-up/>

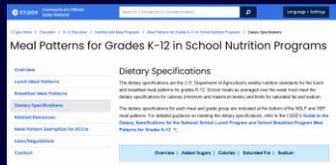
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Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs

- Dietary Specifications



<https://portal.ct.gov/de/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs/dietary-specifications>

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Accepting Medical Statements for Children with Disabilities in the Child Nutrition Programs

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Requirements for Medical Statements Apply To

- All Child Nutrition Programs
- All meal patterns
 - Grades K-12
 - Preschool



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Terminology Updates for Meal Modifications

Old	New as of July 1, 2024
Medical authority	State licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian



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State Licensed Healthcare Professional

An individual authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law



Terms to Know

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State Licensed Healthcare Professional

An individual authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law

- Defined by Connecticut State Department of Public Health (DPH)

Terms to Know

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Connecticut State Licensed Healthcare Professionals

- Licensed physicians (MD)
- Physician assistants (PA) and certified physician assistants (PAC)
- Doctors of osteopathy (DO)
- Advanced practice registered nurses (APRN)



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Who Can Sign Medical Statements

- State licensed healthcare professionals
- Registered dietitians (RD or RDN)
 - May accept beginning July 1, 2024
 - Must accept beginning July 1, 2025

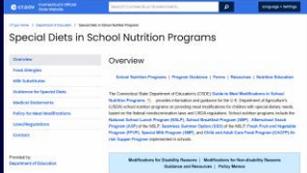


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Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs



<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-school-nutrition-programs>

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Resources for Meal Patterns and Crediting

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Summary of Final Rule Updates to the Meal Patterns for the School Nutrition Programs



https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/mealpattern/summary_final_rule_snp_meal_patterns.pdf

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Meal Patterns for School Nutrition Programs

- NSLP and SBP for grades K-12
- ASP for grades K-12
- NSLP, SBP, and ASP for preschool

2025-26 meal patterns coming soon



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Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs

- 4-day, 5-day, and 7-day weeks

2025-26 meal patterns coming soon



<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-school-nutrition-programs>

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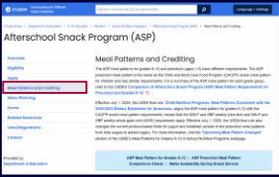
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Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) Meal Pattern for Grades K-12

- Meal Patterns and Crediting

2025-26 meal pattern coming soon



<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/afterschool-snack-program/meal-patterns-and-crediting>

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Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs

2025-26 meal patterns coming soon



<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-preschoolers-in-school-nutrition-programs>

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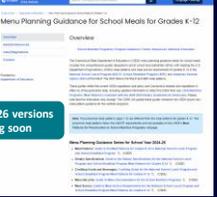
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Menu Planning Guidance for School Meals for Grades K-12

- Meal Patterns
- Dietary Specifications
- Crediting Foods and Beverages
- Menu Documentation
- Meal Service

2025-26 versions coming soon



<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/menu-planning-guidance-for-school-meals>

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Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs

2025-26 versions coming soon



<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-school-nutrition-programs/grains>

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Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs>

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What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

2025-26 updates coming soon

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

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Preschool Meal Pattern Training for the School Nutrition Programs

2025-26 updates coming soon

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

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Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/program-guidance-school-nutrition-programs>

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Resources for the School Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/mealpattern/resources_school_meal_patterns_grades_k-12.pdf

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Resources for the Preschool Meal Patterns

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nsip/preschool/resources_preschool_meal_patterns.pdf

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Contact Information for School Nutrition Programs

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/contact-information-for-school-nutrition-programs>

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1666 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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