

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NATIONAL SCHOOL

3E'S OF HEALTHY LIVING
EDUCATION, EXERCISE AND EATING RIGHT *Lunch Program*

November 2024 Monthly Newsletter

Farm Fresh Challenge Attestation is open now!

The Challenge has ended and it's time to fill out your attestation form. The [attestation form](#) will remain open until November 30. Remember, if you used the tracking sheet, you can attach that with your contact information and be done with the attestation form.

Updates to Federal Financial Regulations (2 CFR 200)

On October 1, 2024, a Final Rule was implemented that made significant updates to 2 CFR 200. While most changes appear to not affect the Nutrition and Household Programs administered by TDA, there are several changes that will impact our operators.

Updated Guidance on Substituting Vegetables for Fruit at Breakfast

USDA has released a new Question & Answer document designed to explain the optional provision that continues to allow the substitution of vegetables for fruits at breakfast, per the 2024 Final Rule, Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These flexibilities provide schools with greater menu planning flexibility at breakfast as compared to the previous regulations and provide a

straightforward approach to support children's health and help students consume a variety of vegetables.

New Farm to School Grant Opportunity for NSLP/CACFP/SFSP

Applications are now open for the 2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Programs for Child Nutrition Program providers participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and/or Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This year, the Request For Application (RFA) has been split into three (3) separate solicitations, two (2) of which are applicable to program operators.

Updated Guidance on Fluid Milk Requirements in the School Meal Programs

USDA has issued a new policy memorandum (SP 01-2025, Fluid Milk Requirements for School Meals) that updates and clarifies current guidance for fluid milk requirements in school meal programs following publication of the 2024 Final Rule, Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This memorandum supersedes SP 29-2011: Nutrition Requirements for Fluid Milk, issued April 14, 2011, and rescinds the Food and Consumer Service Instruction Number 783-7 REV. 1 titled, Milk Requirement – Child Nutrition Programs, released January 24, 1995.

New School Meals Training Series from Team Nutrition

USDA Food and Nutrition Service Team Nutrition is pleased to introduce a new training series, The Road to Successful Menu Planning for School Meals, to help schools plan and implement menus that support updates to the school nutrition standards.

This training series includes quarterly 1-hour live (and recorded) webinars co-hosted with the Institute of Child Nutrition. It also includes short on-demand trainings. Both are designed to provide school nutrition professionals with quick tips, tools, and knowledge needed to meet the nutrition standards for added sugars and sodium and to help create a road map for successful school menu planning now through School Year 2027-2028.

Fiscal Year 2025 CACFP & SFSP **Area Eligibility Data Now Available!**

At the beginning of the fiscal year, USDA releases a special tabulation of data provided by the United States Census Bureau for CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) and SFSP (Summer Food Service Program). This data set can be used to establish area eligibility in both CACFP and SFSP. The USDA mapping tools have been updated to reflect the October 1, 2025 changes.

Click [here](#) to explore the area eligibility map. The data set is also available for download on [FNS' open data site](#).

The Revised Food Buying Guide for **Child Nutrition Programs**

The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG) has been revised to reflect the final rule, “Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans”. This important resource assists CNP operators, food manufacturers, and other stakeholders with purchasing the correct amounts of foods for CNP and determining the contribution that each food makes toward meal pattern requirements. The FBG is available as a Web Tool, Mobile App, and downloadable PDF. The FBG can be accessed [here](#).

Revised Crediting in the Child **Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet Series!**

The Crediting in the Child Nutrition Programs Tip Sheet series has been revised to reflect the changes with the Final Rule, “Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.” The Crediting in the Child Nutrition Programs tip sheet series consists of seven tip sheets covering the five meal components: fruits, vegetables, meats/meat alternates, fluid milk, and grains (three separate tip sheets).

The revised versions introduce the menu-planning flexibilities beginning July 1, 2024, and changes that will be implemented in the coming school years in a quick-reference format.

Access the entire tip sheet series today in [English](#) at or in [Spanish](#). The series will be available in print at a later date!

FSMC New RFP/Contract and Renewal Contract Timeline

SFAs looking to begin a contract with a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) or renew an existing FSMC contract must adhere to TDA timelines. Visit [SquareMeals](#) and look for Important Dates.

FSMC Fridays

TDA will continue to host FSMC Fridays. **Dates are the third Friday of each month from 2:30pm to 3:30pm.** You must register to attend. If Food Service Management Companies attend this webinar, they will be disqualified from submitting proposals. The FSMC Friday schedule and registration are located [here](#).

NSLP-USDA Foods Inventory and Contract Management

- TX-UNPS will not be used for SY25 delivery orders. It is currently closed for all State Contracted Warehouses.
 - Your State Contracted Warehouse inventory system will be the inventory system used for SY25, so it is highly important that training has been completed for staff that place delivery orders and maintain inventory at your school sites. Ask system questions directly to the State Contracted Warehouse staff.
 - Ensure you are organizing your current storage space to make room for your SY25 USDA Foods and monitor your inventory in conjunction with your menu planning. If you have any questions regarding your menus and/or inventory, contact your Education Service Center representative.
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Verification Report Timeline

- October 1, 2024: SFA counts approved school meal applications on file.
- October 31, 2024: SFA counts the number of students with approved school meal applications on file.
- November 1, 2024: 2024 Verification Report opens via jot form: <https://form.jotform.com/241276986330159>. SFAs without school meal applications may begin submitting the Verification Report.
- November 15, 2024: Federal verification deadline. The verification

process must be completed by this date. SFAs with school meal applications may begin submitting the Verification Report.

- November 26, 2024: Due date for the SFA's submission of the Verification Report.

[Update on Local Food for Schools Grant Guidance](#)

The USDA has announced a \$1.7 billion investment to support the purchase of locally and regionally produced foods for emergency assistance. This includes up to \$500 million for states and, for the first time, \$200 million specifically for child care centers! We are currently awaiting guidance on the Local Food for Schools grant and fund allocations. Stay updated by reading the USDA's recent [press release](#).

[Next Local Food for Schools Office Hours: November 13, 2024, 3-4 p.m. CDT](#)

Join us for the November LFS office hours meeting to get the latest updates on the Local Food for Schools grant and learn how to make the most of your funds. To view recorded sessions and slides from previous office hours, please visit the [LFS webpage](#). If you are participating in the LFS grant and are not receiving communications, contact localfoodgrant@texasagriculture.gov.

[Apply for the HMI Recognition Awards Today!](#)

Visit our [SquareMeals](#) page to check out how schools across Texas are improving the nutritional quality of their school meals! Visit the [HMI website](#) for an overview video of each award. The application deadline is **June 30, 2025**. Apply today!

[New Training Series from Team Nutrition!](#)

Explore The Road to Successful Menu Planning for [School Meals](#), a new training series offered by Team Nutrition to help schools prepare for the future updates to school nutrition standards. This series consists of live and on-demand training covering topics such as Added Sugars, Sodium, and Menu Planning!

[USDA 2023 Farm to School Census Results](#)

In October, USDA published the [2023 Farm to School Census](#) results! Significant findings include: - 74% School Food Authorities (SFAs) did at least one Farm to School activity during school year 2022-2023 (14% increase from the 2019 Farm to School Census) - 81% of SFAs participating in Farm to School served local foods at least weekly.

These results show that Farm to School is thriving in Texas schools—and continues to grow stronger with your support! Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey. To view the 2023 Farm to School Census report and learn more about Farm to School in Texas, visit USDA's [Farm to School Census Partner Resources](#) website.

[Crosswalk of 2 CFR 200 Updates Posted on SquareMeals](#)

On October 25, TDA posted news on SquareMeals about updates to 2 CFR 200, the regulation that pertains to use of federal awards. While most updates are non-substantive in nature, some operators have requested to see a full list of the 560 changes to the regulation. TDA has posted on the Policy/Handbook pages of each program a USDA-provided [Excel crosswalk](#) of every edit made to the regulation.

[RELEASE: Updated Pre-Award Civil Rights Compliance Review Form](#)

The Pre-Award Civil Rights Compliance Review Form must be completed by new Contracting Entities (CEs) in all Child Nutrition and Household Programs prior to being approved for participation. This form has recently been updated to clarify that visual observation to obtain estimated racial/ethnic data is not allowable in CACFP and SFSP. Note that visual observation is not explicitly prohibited in any other program at this time. The form has also been updated with additional sources that a prospective CE may use to obtain the estimated data for the upcoming program year. The

[New Guidance Related to Fees for Online Meal Payments](#)

On November 1, 2024, USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) released SP 04-2025, Fees for Electronic Payment Services in the School Meal Programs. This memo states that, effective school year 2027-2028, families with students eligible for reduced-price meal benefits in the school meal programs must not be charged any fees for using electronic payment services in the school meal programs. This requirement ensures that students who are determined eligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits receive the benefits they qualify for without having to pay additional fees along with the cost of a meal. The memo also offers best practices and strategies for school food authorities to ensure that all families are aware of payment options and to ease the financial burden that electronic payment processing fees impose on families. This memorandum supersedes SP 02-2015, Online Fees in the School Meal Programs.

[TANS Update](#)

The Texas Automated Nutrition System (TANS) will replace TX-UNPS for administration and management of all programs beginning with Program Year 2026 applications. Timelines, resources, and updates are available now on the [Systems Hub](#).



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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