

School Nutrition Update

March 27-31, 2023



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Program Operations Information

Submit Comments on New CEP Proposed Regulation Change – Deadline 5/8

On March 22, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Vilsack announced a [proposed regulation change](#) that would give more schools the option to provide healthy school meals to all students at no cost. The proposed rule would expand access to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) by lowering the minimum identified student percentage participation threshold from 40 percent to 25 percent, which would give states and schools greater flexibility to choose to invest non-federal funds to offer no-cost meals to all enrolled students. As a result, more students, families, and schools would have an opportunity to experience the benefits of CEP, including access to meals at no cost, eliminating unpaid meal charges, minimizing stigma, reducing paperwork for School Nutrition staff and families, and streamlining meal service operations.

When all students have access to healthy school meals, meal participation tends to increase, and more children can experience nutritional benefits that fuel their learning, growth, and development. This proposed rule would also support state and local choices to expand the availability of free school meals for all through programs supported by state or local funding. Lowering the eligibility threshold would allow states and local educational agencies to optimize use of CEP, helping them to support school meals in a more streamlined manner. While the proposed rule does not increase federal funds for school meals, President Biden’s 2024 budget requests an additional \$15 billion over 10 years to support schools participating in CEP and reach nine million more children.

FNS encourages all interested parties to comment on the CEP proposed rule during the 45-day comment period. Written comments on this proposed rule should be received on or before May 8, 2023 to receive consideration. The Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, invites interested persons to submit written comments on this proposed rule. Comments may be submitted in writing by one of the following methods:

- Federal eRulemaking portal: Go to <https://www.regulations.gov/document/FNS-2022-0044-0001/comment>. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.
- Mail: Send comments to School Meals Policy Division, Food and Nutrition Service, P.O. Box 9233, Reston, VA 20195. All written comments submitted in response to this proposed rule will be included in the record and will be made available to the public. Please be advised that the substance of the comments and the identity of the individuals or entities submitting the comments will be subject to public disclosure. FNS will make the written comments publicly available on the internet via <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Make Your Voice Heard – Submit Comments on New Child Nutrition Standards Proposed Rule – Due 4/10

On February 3, the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) announced a new proposed rule, “[Child Nutrition Programs: Revisions to Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)”. The proposed rule contains new Child Nutrition regulations regarding the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Summer Food Service Programs, and Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Every voice matters! Submit your comments on how the new regulations in the proposed rule will impact your programs. The actual number of comments received makes a tremendous difference in the outcome. USDA will review and record all comments submitted. The standards are available for public comment for 60 days from February 7 through April 10, 2023. School Nutrition professionals and other stakeholders are encouraged to review the [proposed rule and related materials](#) and [submit comments](#).

Submit Comments on School Meals Operation Study: Evaluation of the School-Based Child Nutrition Programs – Deadline 4/3

Section 28(a) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act authorizes the USDA Secretary to conduct annual national performance assessments of the school meal programs. The USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) plans to conduct this annual assessment through the School Meal Operations (SMO) Study in SY 2023-24. The SMO Study will collect data from State and local agencies on the Child Nutrition COVID-19 waivers as well as data on state and local program operations during SY 2022–23. This study will help USDA, FNS obtain:

1. General descriptive data on the characteristics of Child Nutrition Programs to inform the budget process and answer questions about topics of current policy interest;
2. Data on Program operations to identify potential topics for training and technical assistance for School Food Authorities (SFAs) and State agencies (SAs) responsible for administering the Child Nutrition Programs;
3. Administrative data to identify program trends and predictors; and
4. Information on the use and effectiveness of the Child Nutrition COVID–19 waivers.

The USDA, Food and Nutrition Service has made changes to their plans to collect data as part of the SMO Study. In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the general public and other public agencies to comment on this proposed information collection. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service is seeking input on ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected and ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond. For more information, view the [announcement](#). Written comments must be received on or before April 3, 2023. Comments may be sent to Darcy Gungor at darcy.gungor@usda.gov. Comments will also be accepted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal. Go to www.regulations.gov, and follow the online instructions for submitting comments electronically.

School Nutrition Spotlight

Celebrating National Ag Day – Weaverville Primary

Buncombe County Schools Nutrition knows how to make kids “moo”! Students at Weaverville Primary celebrated National Agriculture Day on March 21. The Buncombe County and Weaverville Primary School Nutrition Team collaborated with The Dairy Alliance for the event. What a fun way to learn more about agriculture and appreciate our farmers!



Follow/Like Us on Social Media

Did you know you could find the NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition on social media? Follow or like our pages - @NCSchoolMeals and @Ray4NCKids on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Share Your School Nutrition Photos

The NCDPI, Office of School Nutrition wants to highlight the appealing, wholesome, quality meals our School Nutrition Programs across the state offer to students each day. Share your beautiful photos of serving lines and complete school breakfast or school lunch meals with us. Please send to Tracey Bates, NCDPI School Nutrition Promotion Specialist, at tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov. Make sure to include the school and district info so we can aim to credit the source. Be on the lookout for photos of school meals from across the state on social media.



Wilkes County Schools

Send in Articles or Topics of Interest for the School Nutrition Update E-letter

If you have a resource, grant, job opportunity, continuing education event, award announcement, shout out or other news item for the School Nutrition Update, please send a brief article (250 words or less) to Tracey Bates, tracey.bates@dpi.nc.gov, by 12 pm on the Wednesday prior to when the SN Update is sent out the following week. Please include “**SN Update**” in the email subject line. If there are topics of interest you would also like to see included, please share as well.

Grant Opportunity

Apply for School Nutrition Foundation Equipment Grants – Due 3/31

The School Nutrition Foundation (SNF) is teaming up with industry partners to provide new kitchen equipment to school districts. Apply now for the 2023 SNF Equipment Grant Program, featuring applications for five grants. Eligible applicants have the opportunity to win equipment grants, each worth between \$20,000 to \$100,000 of equipment. Applications and photos must be submitted by a School Nutrition Director. There is a submission cap of thirty applications for each grant. March 31 is the grant application deadline. [Learn more and apply.](#)

Apply for Professional Development Scholarships – Due 3/31

The deadline for School Nutrition Foundation Professional Development Scholarships is March 31, 2023. School Nutrition Association (SNA) members can achieve their educational dreams with a scholarship from the School Nutrition Foundation. These scholarships are intended to provide funding for tuition and books for the following school year. Three (3) scholarships are available for 2023: Superhero Scholarship from Bart Christian (multiple scholarships available each year), Schwan’s Food Service Scholarship (multiple scholarships of up to \$2,500 each), and the Nancy Curry Scholarship (one scholarship of \$500 is awarded each year, funded by Handgards, Inc., and friends of Nancy). Winners will be announced in Spring 2023. Use the convenient Common Application to apply for all three scholarships. [Learn more and apply.](#)

Going Local Grant – Due 4/15

The North Carolina Farm Bureau is happy to provide agricultural outreach grants to North Carolina teachers through the Ag in the Classroom Going Local program. These grants value up to \$500. Going Local Grants help educators provide Pre-K through collegiate level students with valuable, real-world education and experiences directly related to the agricultural industry and the N.C. Standard Course of Study. Teachers

practicing in private and public North Carolina schools, colleges, and universities are encouraged to apply. The deadline to submit an application is April 15, 2023. [Learn more and apply.](#)

Growing Minds Grant – Due 15th of Each Month Through 4/15

The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), Growing Minds program wants to help fund your farm to school project in Western North Carolina! This mini-grant program connects K-12 schools throughout the eighteen westernmost counties of North Carolina with local agriculture and gives children positive experiences with healthy local foods through the four components of farm to school: farm field trips, local food cooking and taste tests, school gardens, and local food served in school cafeterias. Farm to school activity mini-grants will be provided up to \$1,000. Mini-grant applications are due every month on the 15th through April 15, 2023 and will be awarded by the 30th of each month! [Learn more and apply.](#)

Apply for FY 2023 Team Nutrition Grant – Due 5/22

A request for applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Team Nutrition Grant Supporting Nutrition Education for School-Aged Children is now available. The USDA, Food and Nutrition Service expects to award approximately \$10 million in total funding (up to \$1,000,000 per State Agency or School Food Authority (SFA) through a competitive award process for use over a three-year grant period). Should additional funds become available, USDA may increase the grant ceiling and/or award more grants.

The FY 2023 Team Nutrition Grant Supporting Nutrition Education for School-Aged Children will support State Agencies and SFAs in implementing the adoption of healthy eating patterns by school-aged children (grades pre-K through 12) and their families through the coordination and implementation of [MyPlate nutrition education](#) connected to the nutritious meals and snacks offered through USDA Child Nutrition Programs. State Agency and SFA grantees will provide direct nutrition education to students, parents/caregivers, and other school stakeholders, and build capacity for revitalizing local school wellness policies, to improve the consumption of nutritious foods and beverages offered through USDA Child Nutrition Programs.

Full grant applications are due via [Grants.gov](#) by 11:59 pm ET on May 22, 2023. Grant information is available on the USDA [website](#). USDA will host an informational webinar on April 5 at 3:00 pm ET. [Register](#) in advance to participate. For questions regarding applications, please contact the Grant Officer, Anna Arrowsmith, anna.arrowsmith@usda.gov.

Continuing Education

Participate in the N.C. SHAC Learning Collaborative – 3/27, 3:30 pm ET

NCDPI, N.C. Healthy Schools and the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), Division of Child and Family Wellbeing are hosting monthly opportunities for a School Health Advisory Coalition (SHAC) Learning Collaborative.

- Learning collaboratives are primarily focused on mental and behavioral health funding but open to all.
- While these meetings will primarily focus on these mental and behavioral health activities aligned with the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model, there will be opportunities to discuss general SHAC questions, e.g., partnerships, use of data, additional activities by SHACs, and questions, as well.

- The collaboratives are scheduled for the last Monday of each month at 3:30 pm (unless scheduled otherwise, due to holidays, etc.) and are open to all SHAC representatives to learn more about SHAC activities, particularly those related to the mental and behavioral health funding, as part of the StrongSchoolsNC Testing Program.

The next SHAC Learning Collaborative is scheduled for March 27 at 3:30 pm. During the learning collaborative, there will be time for open Q&A regarding SHAC funding, processes, etc., and then, there will be focused time for the following:

- Updates from SHACs on how you are using funds for professional development, school gardens, employee wellness, trauma informed approaches, physical activity equipment, and more. Please come prepared to share.
- ESSER funds and SHACs.
- Update about the annual statewide SHAC meeting.

Monday, March 27 at 3:30 pm

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer, mobile app, or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email Susanne Schmal, susanne.schmal@dpi.nc.gov, to be added to the SHAC Learning Collaborative monthly calendar invitation.

Join N.C. Healthy Schools Office Hours – 3/28, 3 pm ET

Join NCDPI, N.C. Healthy Schools for March Office Hours to discuss professional development and how the N.C. Healthy Schools Team can best support your school district and learning needs. Need help thinking about how to use all the data you collect? Want to learn more about trauma, adolescent brain development, or youth mental health? Interested in tools and resources to best support the health and well-being of students, etc.? All healthy schools related professional development needs and topics are welcome! We are excited to learn more about how we can best support you and your district.

Healthy Schools Office Hours: Tuesday, March 28 at 3:00 pm

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer, mobile app, or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Email Lillian Pinto, lillian.pinto@dpi.nc.gov, to be added to the monthly office hours calendar invitation.

Learn How to Incorporate Up-to-date Local Food Systems Data in Grant Applications – 3/30, 2 pm ET

Are you applying for a local or regional food systems grant and looking to incorporate up-to-date local food systems data in your application? In a webinar on March 30 at 2 pm ET, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service will explore and demo a new tool called the Food and Agriculture Mapper and Explorer (FAME), which brings together data from dozens of publicly available datasets to make it easy for food systems practitioners to search

and visualize information about U.S. local and regional food systems. There will be a live question and answer session at the end. [Learn more and register.](#)

FAME is an open-access resource with the goals of supporting the utilization of data in program development, evaluation, and decision making and improving access to data. Using an equity focused lens, this resource includes indicators covering topics including labor, community resources, nutrition security and food access, business development, and local food sales and works to improve access to more comprehensive data on local and regional food systems. Join this webinar to learn how to best make use of this resource and to learn more about the state of local food systems in a given area.

Access Virtual Training Opportunities

The Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) has compiled [resources to help prevent the spread of the Coronavirus](#). Online food safety/HACCP training is available on the NCDPI, School Nutrition [website](#) and the ICN [website](#). Additional continuing education resources are available on the School Nutrition [website](#) from NCDPI, ICN, the School Nutrition Association and other agencies and organizations. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics offers [continuing professional education resources](#) for Registered Dietitians/Nutritionists (RDNs) and Dietetic Technicians, Registered (DTRs).

Questions

If you have any questions regarding these updates, please reach out to your [regional consultants](#).

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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