



HNS # 06-2024

*Original Signed*

**MEMORANDUM**

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**To:** School Food Authorities Operating the National School Lunch Program

**From:** Melissa Conner, Senior Deputy Associate Superintendent  
Arizona Department of Education, Health and Nutrition Services Division

**Date:** July 1, 2024

**Subject:** School Year 2024-2025 Updates and Reminders for SFAs

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide reminders and new information for School Food Authorities (SFAs) applying to operate the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Special Milk Program (SMP), and/or Afterschool Care Snack Program (ASCSP) and At-Risk Afterschool Meals component of Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) during School Year 2024-2025 (SY 2024-25). This guidance also pertains to SFAs participating in the USDA Foods in Schools Program and the USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (USDA DoD Fresh).

<b>Annual Application Requirements</b>
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SFAs are encouraged to use the [2024-2025 School Meals Application Checklist](#) to ensure all application requirements are completed. SFAs will communicate with their assigned Health and Nutrition Services (HNS) Specialist to complete the annual application requirements for SY 2024-25. The contact information for the assigned specialist can be found at the top of the sponsor application in CNPWeb. SFAs are encouraged to prepare and submit all components of the application as early as possible and should allow three weeks for the application approval process to be completed. SFAs must ensure that all applications and all required components are submitted with adequate time for approval and meet claiming deadlines.

HNS created the *Step-by-Step Instruction: How to Submit Site and Sponsor Applications in CNPWeb* which guides the user through navigating CNPWeb and completing the fields required in the sponsor and site applications. The training is available in the [NSLP Online Training Library](#).

**CNPWeb Site and Sponsor Applications**

Each school year, SFAs are required to submit a sponsor application and an application for each site via CNPWeb. The Sponsor application collects entity level information including contact information, program beginning and end dates, as well as indication of approved participation in one of the Special Provision Options (if applicable). The site application collects site level operational information

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including site contact information, meal service types, and identifies the site's intended participation in one or more of the Child Nutrition Programs.

The annual submission and approval of the site and sponsor applications is a required step for SFAs to submit reimbursement requests for meals served under the Child Nutrition Programs listed below.

- NSLP
- SBP
- SMP
- ASCSP
- At-Risk Afterschool Meals component of CACFP

SFAs electing to operate NSLP and/or SBP under a Special Provision Option must have completed the provision application process prior to CNPWeb application approval. As with prior years, applications for Provision 2, Provision 3, and Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) were due June 30, 2024.

SFAs adding sites to the CNPWeb system must complete and submit the Add/Change/Delete Form to HNS. Additionally, sites that are legally separate from the SFA must also include an [Inter-Agency Partnership Agreement](#). Authorized signers can complete an Add/Change/Delete form through a HelpDesk ticket by accessing <https://helpdeskexternal.azed.gov/> with the steps as follows:

- Click the icon for 'New Request'
- Locate Health and Nutrition Services templates
- Select 'HNS Add/Change/Delete Form'
- Complete all require fields and applicable optional fields within HelpDesk's Add/Change/Delete Form
- \*User/Requestor submitting Add/Change/Delete form must be submitted by the Designated Official or an Authorized Signer listed on the Food Program Permanent Service Agreement
- At the bottom of the form, click the blue button: 'Add Request'

### **CNPWeb Checklist Items and Additional Documentation**

Checklist items are generated based on the entity's operation and must be submitted for approval along with the CNPWeb application. Checklist items can be referenced within CNPWeb once site and sponsor applications have been submitted. Applications will not be approved until all checklist items required for operation have been received and approved by HNS. There are additional items that may not generate a checklist item within CNPWeb, but that must be reviewed, and the HNS Specialist may request to have submitted by the SFA to support the information entered in the submitted application. Operators shall be prepared with the following:

- Custom, scannable, or electronic household meal application, parent letter, and/or notification of meal benefits
- Contractual agreements for vended meal service (Food Service Management Company, Caterers, SFAs serving as caterers)
- At-Risk Meals Component Principal Addendum
- Department of Economic Security (DES)/ Department of Health Services (DHS) License
- 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status
- Area eligibility documentation for sites operating At-Risk/ASCSP that are using school level data other than the site

- Food Program Permanent Service Agreement (FPPSA): The FPPSA shall be reviewed by the SFA to ensure the Designated Official and all Authorized Signers are current. If the Designated Official or any of the Authorized Signers are no longer employed by the SFA, a new FPPSA must be initiated. The [FPPSA Initiation Form](#) can be started through the link provided and will be completed once all parties have signed using Adobe Sign. Any questions related to the submission or updating of the FPPSA should be directed to the assigned HNS Specialist.
- Free and Reduced-Price Policy Statement/Addendums: The SFA must review the free and reduced-price policy for substantive changes. The policy statement must be updated and resubmitted to their assigned HNS Specialist if there are any changes to the process or staff/position responsible for eligibility determinations. In all cases, the SFA must have an approved policy statement on file with ADE that accurately describes its current free and reduced-price policies. Amendments must be submitted for approval to their assigned HNS Specialist no later than October 15th each year. The [Free and Reduced Price Policy Statement](#) template can be accessed on ADE's [National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program website](#) under the Resources for Operators - Program Forms and Resources area or by utilizing the link provided.

### **Access to CNP Applications via ADEConnect**

ADEConnect provides a single sign-on for multiple applications used by ADE, for example the *CNPWeb*. Access to *CNPWeb* is granted by the Entity Administrator established by and for the entity. Whether the Entity Administrator (EA) is listed as an Authorized Signer on the FPPSA or not, EAs, shall not grant child nutrition programs technology systems access to consultants, consulting firms or Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs) contracting with SFA. The child nutrition programs technology systems include:

- *MyFOODS* (which is outside of the ADEConnect);
- *FFAVORS* (which is outside of the ADEConnect);
- *CNPWeb*
- *CNP Direct Certification/Direct Verification*;
- *CNP Verification*;
- *CNP Supplemental Payments*; and
- *CNP Summer EBT SUN Bucks – SFA*.

SFAs can review details in Section x of the FPPSA, which is agreed upon by the Designated Official when the FPPSA is signed. The Designated Official has the responsibility to ensure unauthorized individuals including consultants and employees of FSMCs are not granted access to the child nutrition programs technology systems.

<h3><b>Access to USDA Foods, Local Food Purchasing, and Updates to the School Nutrition Standards</b></h3>
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#### **USDA Foods In Schools myFOODS Activation**

SFAs must have an active status in myFOODS to utilize their entitlement dollars provided through the USDA Foods in Schools program for SY 2024-25. myFOODS is the online portal that collects entity level information including contact and billing information, as well as site level delivery information required by the ADE contracted warehouse responsible for receiving and distributing products. Returning operators should use the [2024-2025 School Meals Application Checklist](#) to ensure all activation activities are completed. myFOODS activation must be completed prior to ordering materials

from USDA Foods Direct Delivery or DoD Fresh. For SY 2024-25, an approved CNPWeb application is *not* required prior to ordering.

SFAs that have not previously accessed their entitlement for USDA Foods in Schools may do so at any time. SFAs will contact HNS to discuss the entitlement program, obtain login credentials, and begin the process of establishing a myFOODS account and delivery site(s).

### **Procuring Local Foods using Geographic Preference Expansion**

As detailed in SP 22-2024, [Geographic Preference Expansion Related to the Final Rule titled, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020- 2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), beginning July 1, 2024, CNP operators are permitted to use "locally grown", "locally raised", or "locally caught" as a specification when procuring unprocessed agricultural products for program meals, snacks, and milk. The implementation memo provides the following:

- Use local as a specification (i.e., the written description of a product or service that a vendor must meet to be considered responsive to a solicitation) for local unprocessed agricultural products;
- Use a defined scoring advantage (e.g., additional credit or points given to local unprocessed agricultural products during the evaluation of responses to a solicitation) for local unprocessed agricultural products;
- Adopt a mix of both strategies; or,
- Elect not to use any of these approaches.

### **School Nutrition Standards – New Requirements**

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published a final rule titled, Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, effective July 1, 2024.

USDA is gradually phasing in required changes. [A summary of the changes](#) has been provided by FNS. While Program operators are not required to make any changes to their menus until School Year 2025-2026, early implementation is an option. Program operators are encouraged to visit [Updates to the School Nutrition Standards](#) to access resources, videos, toolkits, and guidance for the School Nutrition Standards.

## **Additional Updates**

### **Reduced-Price Meals Subsidy**

Under traditional operations of the NSLP and SBP, families with students who qualify for reduced-price meal benefits may incur a fee of up to \$0.40 for each lunch and up to \$0.30 for each breakfast. However, the Arizona legislature appropriated one-time funding to reduce or eliminate copayments that would otherwise be charged to children eligible for reduced-price meals during the 2024-2025 school year. The state appropriation will be provided to the NSLP and SBP operators by ADE as a per-meal reimbursement. If the appropriated amount is insufficient to cover all meals served to students certified as eligible for reduced-price meal benefits, ADE will reduce the funding proportionately and notify the impacted SFAs.

To obtain the per meal reimbursement, all SFAs, except those operating CEP or Provision 2 or 3 in a non-base year, shall continue to follow their Free and Reduced-Price Policy which includes the distribution of the Household Application for Free and Reduced-Price Meals, use of the *CNP Direct*

*Certification* system to certify students for free or reduced-price meal benefits, and track the eligibility on the benefit issuance document. Meals served to children certified as eligible for reduced-price meal benefits are then claimed in the reduced category of the *CNPWeb* monthly claim. SFAs must also notify families and offer meals free of charge to the students who are certified as eligible for reduced-price meal benefits.

### **Training for School Nutrition Programs**

Annual Requirements: Effective July 1, 2015, SFAs must ensure that all new and current school nutrition program staff meet the minimum annual training requirements per USDA's Professional Standards regulations. These requirements were set forth to help employees enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities specific to their position in NSLP. Because the trainings offered are vast in quantity and diverse in content, HNS has drafted specialized [NSLP Training Curriculum](#) based on job duties to help directors get started creating training plans for the year. For more information on Professional Standards, visit the [NSLP Training webpage](#), under the "Build Your Employee Training Plans" accordion.

Civil Rights Training is required annually to ensure all staff are aware of and understand the civil rights requirements. CNP operators must train: Staff each year, new employees before participating in program activities, and volunteers as are appropriate to their roles and responsibilities. HNS provides a Civil Rights Compliance for Child Nutrition Operators ONLINE COURSE ([English](#)) ([Spanish](#)). This training can count towards Professional Standards requirements.

School nutrition program directors, management, and staff tasked with National School Lunch Program procurement responsibilities must complete training on Federal procurement standards annually. HNS provides a [Procurement Basics](#) ONLINE COURSE. This training can count towards Professional Standards requirements.

HNS continues to offer our monthly Staying on Track webinar series that reviews key HNS communications sent over the past month to ensure SFAs are aware of all program updates and required tasks. Webinars may be registered for in the [ADE Professional Learning and Development \(APLD\)](#).

### **Farm Fresh Challenge and upLIFT**

Each year, HNS invites operators to join the Farm Fresh Challenge. This initiative aims to empower program operators by cultivating excitement for fresh, locally sourced foods. Participants are required to complete a series of challenges that encourage tasting, teaching, and connecting individuals to Arizona's local foods. In the SY 2024-25 upLIFT initiative, "Fresh Futures: Farm-to-Table School Meals," innovative strategies will be introduced for operators to LEARN about the nutritional and program advantages of locally sourced, scratch-made meals. It also aims to INSPIRE operators to collaborate with local producers and vendors, FEED participants healthy, locally sourced meals, and TEACH the community about their meal service program. The goal is to integrate the Farm Fresh Challenge with supporting local food procurement, encouraging communities to appreciate the advantages of offering fresh, local nutrition at their sites this year!

### **Healthy Meals Incentives**

FNS, in partnership with Action for Healthy Kids, created a recognition and incentive program for celebrating improvements to the nutritional quality of school meals. SFAs can apply for an award anytime during this school year, through June 30, 2025. SFAs meeting recognition award criteria will receive the following:

- National and local recognition through traditional and social media.
- Awardee toolkit that includes promotional resources for use on the web, social media, and traditional media.
- Travel stipends to attend a national Healthy Meals Summit.
- Access to diverse best practices from recognition awardees, stakeholder engagement, training and technical assistance activities, and Healthy Meals Summits.

Please visit the [Action for Healthy Kids](#) website to review the recognition awards categories and criteria, access the application portal, and obtain helpful resources to complete the application.

### **HelpDesk to Connect with HNS**

ADE uses the ticketing system, HelpDesk, to receive, track and respond to requests for various types of assistance. In addition to current options in the Service Request Catalog, including one time exception requests, reimbursement claim/attendance factor issues, and the Add/Change/Delete Form, HNS will be expanding the options for SFAs to select. SFAs are encouraged to use HelpDesk when in need of any assistance from HNS; requests can be routed to the assigned HNS Specialist for the SFA. Unlike individual email-based requests, the HelpDesk provides the requester, responder, and management visibility to the request status, ongoing communications, and notifications related to request. Access the HelpDesk by using the link: <https://helpdeskexternal.azed.gov/> and follow the steps listed below to complete the form fields.

- Click the icon for 'New Request'
- Locate Health and Nutrition Services
- Choose from the drop-down options
- Complete all required fields and applicable optional fields
  - Providing more detail in the request will help it to be routed to the appropriate staff member.
  - Some fields cannot be edited.
- Drag and drop any related items into the Attachment box
- At the bottom of the form, click the blue button: 'Add Request'

The HelpDesk is part of the ADEConnect. Those who do not have an ADEConnect account will be prompted to create one.

### **Confidentiality and Disclosure of NSLP Eligibility Information**

Students' NSLP/SBP eligibility information shall not be made available to all school officials as a general practice. SFAs are encouraged to review the resources and guidance pertaining to confidentiality and disclosure of student eligibility information located in Section 5 of the [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#).

The SFA may disclose children's eligibility status only to persons determined to be "directly connected" with the administration or enforcement of a Federal education program, State education program, State health program, or a means-tested nutrition program, as well as to persons directly connected with the Comptroller General Office or law enforcement for an authorized activity [7 CFR 245.6(f)(3)].



Although a program or person may be authorized under the National School Lunch Act to access students' free and reduced-price eligibility information, there must be a legitimate "need to know" to provide a service or carry out an authorized activity. Local Educational Agencies must ensure data systems, records, and other means of accessing a student's eligibility status are limited to officials directly connected with administration or enforcement of a Federal or State program or activity [7 CFR 245.6(f)(3)(i)].

### **Arizona Educational Data Standards (AzEDS)**

Beginning in SY 2024-25 public districts and charters that participate in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs and that report to the ADE AzEDS reporting system via their student information system will be required to populate new data fields for each child via the AzEDs enrollment record.

The new data fields to be reported for each student are located in the AzEDS Student Food Service Association section. The subsection descriptors are "Eligibility Source" and "Eligibility Status". Each student's eligibility status of "Free", "Reduced-Price" or "Full Pay" must be provided based on the data source the SFA used to establish the eligibility for the NSLP/SBP. The data sources are "Direct Certification" or "USDA Income Application" or Other Source Categorically Eligible". The data reported in the new Student Food Service Association section will be used to calculate percentages of student eligible for Free or Reduced-Price meal benefits and for purposes of determining individual, student-level eligibility for 2025 SUN Bucks (Summer EBT) benefits. SFAs are encouraged to communicate with district or school staff regarding the new Student Food Service Association data fields in AzEDS and establish a policy and procedure to ensure the secure transmission of NSLP/SBP information and that confidentiality measures are in place.

If you have questions concerning this guidance, please contact your assigned HNS specialist. The contact information for the assigned HNS specialist can be found at the top of the sponsor application in CNPWeb.

*In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.*

*Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.*

*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/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002->*

[508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.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) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. *email:* [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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