

# SchoolMealsNews Bulletin 1920-01

Announcements from the WI DPI School Nutrition Team

August 1, 2019

- Updates from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Updates from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) School Nutrition Team
- Updates from the DPI AmeriCorps Farm to School Program

## Updates from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

### [USDA Policy Memorandum SP 31-2019: Farm Bill Implementation Memo: Donated Traditional Foods and Civil Liability](#)

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify Child Nutrition Program operators of the 2018 Farm Bill's expansion of the provision stating that certain groups are not liable in civil cases regarding the donation and service of traditional foods. This provision only applies to food service programs at public and nonprofit facilities that primarily serve Indians, including those operated by Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations.

Section 4203 of the 2018 Farm Bill (Public Law 115-334) amended the prior authority and eliminated civil liability for states, counties or county equivalents, local educational agencies (LEAs), and entities or persons authorized to facilitate the donation, storage, preparation, or serving of traditional foods by the operator of a food service program. These organizations and persons are not liable in any civil action for any damage, injury, or death caused to any person by the storage, preparation, donation, or serving of traditional foods through food service programs, including the USDA Child Nutrition Programs.

[USDA Policy Memorandum SP 42-2015: Service of Traditional Foods in Public Facilities](#) is still in effect. However, the 2018 Farm Bill expanded the elimination of civil liability to additional organizations and persons and added the "storage" and "preparation" of donated traditional foods to the list of activities covered by the provision.

## **USDA Proposed Rule: Revision of Categorical Eligibility in SNAP**

USDA published a proposed rule titled *Revision of Categorical Eligibility in SNAP* on July 24, 2019. A summary of the proposed changes can be found on this [factsheet](#). There is a 60-day comment period that is set to end on September 23, 2019. Ways to submit comments include the following:

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.
- Mail: Send comments to Program Design Branch, Program Development Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, VA 22302.
- Email: Send comments to [SNAPPDBRules@usda.gov](mailto:SNAPPDBRules@usda.gov). Include Docket ID Number [FNS-2018- 0037], “Revision of Categorical Eligibility in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance” in the subject line of the message.

## **USDA on YouTube**

Did you know that USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has a [YouTube channel](#)? Check out recorded USDA FNS webinars and informational videos, such as [Start Smart with Breakfast](#) or the [Crediting Updates for Child Nutrition Programs: Be in the Know!](#) webinar series.

## **Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs Interactive Web-Based Tool**

A new enhancement to the Food Buying Guide (FBG) for Child Nutrition Programs Interactive Web-Based Tool, Part 2 of the Exhibit A Grains Tool, is now available. The first release of the Exhibit A Grains Tool on June 10 allows users to search their grain product (as listed on Exhibit A) and enter in the serving size as listed on the product label. The tool determines the ounce equivalent (oz eq) grains or grains/bread serving(s) for the grain product. The second part to the Exhibit A Grains Tool includes an additional capability to determine the number of servings a program needs to serve to obtain a specific meal pattern contribution. Check out the [Exhibit A Grains Tool](#) today.

The [FBG Mobile App](#) is currently available on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Check to ensure you have the most current version of the app on your mobile devices!

## [Offer versus Serve \(OVS\) National School Lunch Program Posters and Lunch and Breakfast OVS Tip sheets!](#)

The Offer versus Serve (OVS) Lunch Posters for elementary, middle, and high school students may be used as signage to instruct students to select a reimbursable meal under OVS. The OVS tip sheets are intended for use by school foodservice staff to enhance their understanding of OVS requirements at breakfast and lunch.

## [USDA Foods Toolkit](#)

The USDA Foods Toolkit is a collection of valuable resources to assist child nutrition professionals in effectively using their USDA Food entitlement and to help them educate students, staff, and the community about the healthy contributions that USDA Foods provide to their meal programs. Here are a few resources we feel would be most beneficial to Wisconsin School Nutrition Professionals.

### *Resources*

- [USDA Foods Cost Analysis Tool](#)
- [USDA Foods Cookbook Resources](#)
- [Team Nutrition Recipes and Cookbook Toolkit](#)
- [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Links to Other Resources](#)

### *Infographics*

- [USDA Foods in Schools SY 2016 - 2017](#)
- [USDA Foods in Schools: Summary by Program SY 2016 - 2017](#)
- [USDA Foods in Schools: State Overview SY 2016 -2017](#)
- [USDA DoD Fresh in Schools SY 2016 - 2017](#)

### *Fact Sheets*

- [USDA Foods: Changing School Lunch and Supporting American Agriculture Nationwide](#)
- [USDA Foods Product Information Sheets for Child Nutrition Programs](#)

- [USDA Foods Whole Grain Fact Sheet](#)
- [USDA Foods Processing Fact Sheet](#)

#### *Marketing Tools*

- [USDA Foods Video](#)
- [USDA Foods Infographic](#)

#### **USDA Farm to School Census: The census is coming, the census is coming.....**

The [Office of Community Food Systems](#) is excited to announce that the third [Farm to School Census](#) will launch this September. The Farm to School Census (the Census) is the only national survey that examines school districts' farm to school activities, such as local food purchasing behaviors, the number and use of school gardens, and the frequency of agricultural education. The Census surveys all School Food Authorities (SFAs) participating in the USDA [National School Lunch Program](#) in all 50 states, Washington D.C., the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, and Puerto Rico.

USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has contracted with the research firm [Abt Associates](#) to administer the Census. Abt will start contacting state agencies and school districts later this summer.

The Census is a valuable measure of the effectiveness, scope, and reach of farm to school activities, nationwide, over time. It is important to participate in the Census, regardless of your current level of farm to school participation. A strong response rate helps ensure that USDA, states, and partners have a clear understanding of the scope of farm to school activities, best practices, and challenges across the country. USDA uses Census data to develop new resources, tools, and policies that help strengthen and grow farm to school programs nationwide.

#### *What Counts as a Farm to School Activity?*

Farm to school encompasses an array of activities, such as the procurement of local or regional foods and educational activities involving food, agriculture, or nutrition. These activities include, but are not limited to:

- Serving or promoting local food products in the cafeteria, in the classroom, or elsewhere at school (for example, through programs such as the [School Breakfast Program](#) (SBP), the [National School Lunch Program](#) (NSLP), the [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#), the [Summer Food Service Program](#), afterschool snacks or suppers through the [Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and through [food distribution programs](#) such as USDA Foods and USDA Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program);
- Conducting educational activities related to local foods, including bringing farmers and producers to the schools, taste testing local foods, hosting farmers' markets at schools, including agricultural lessons in classroom curricula, and culinary education focused on local foods;
- Taking field trips to farms, farmers' markets, or local food processing facilities;
- Educational sessions for students, parents, and community members focused on local foods and agriculture; and/or
- Creating, tending to, or harvesting from school gardens, or conducting education lessons in and about the school gardens.

### *How Should I Prepare?*

The Census will primarily examine farm to school activities that occurred during the 2018-2019 school year. Districts can begin preparing for the Census by organizing their local purchasing and farm to school data.

Specifically, SFAs should begin gathering data on:

- Their definition of local;
- The grade levels that participated in farm to school activities;
- The number of schools that participated in farm to school activities;
- The number of schools that provided agricultural education;
- The number of schools that had edible school gardens;
- The number of salad bars in the SFA;
- The number of salad bars that served local foods;
- The top five local foods purchased in 2018-2019;

- The total amount of money spent on food;
- The amount of money spent on local foods;
- The sources of local products; and
- The number of full- and part-time staff dedicated to farm to school efforts.

### *Why Should I Complete the Census?*

The Census is very popular! The information gathered through the Census helps improve farm to school efforts at all levels. Schools, state agencies, researchers, advocates, and community partners all use Census data to better understand the extent and impact of farm to school efforts within their community and across the country.

- USDA utilizes Census data to design new resources, develop trainings, and inform the [Farm to School Grant Program](#).
- Researchers use Census data to analyze the state of farm to school nationwide. Their analysis helps identify trends and best practices that can be replicated in your own school!
- Decision makers use Census data at the federal, state, and local levels to identify gaps in programming and develop policies and programs that encourage growth.
- Non-profits partners use Census data for marketing, promotion, program planning, resource development, and funding purposes.
- Producers use the Census to find districts interested in buying local foods.

Families use Census data to better understand how their school teaches healthy eating habits and supports their local ag-economy!

### **USDA Announces Record-Breaking Funding for 2019 Farm to School Grants**

On July 16, 2019, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced the award of more than \$9 million in USDA Farm to School Program grants that will increase the amount of healthy, local foods served in schools and create economic opportunities for nearby farmers.

This year marks an all-time high of funding and projects in the program, with grants supporting 126 selected projects across 42 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. These projects are expected to serve more than 3.2 million students in over 5,400 schools.

This record-breaking year for the USDA Farm to School Grant Program was made possible by increased funding from Congress for fiscal years 2018 and 2019, which enabled USDA to award 52 more grants than the previous highest year of 2016 when 74 were granted. Grants range from \$20,000 to \$100,000 and fund equipment purchases and experiential learning activities, including planting school gardens, offering taste tests to children, and organizing field trips to local farms and food producers. Congratulations to these two grant awardees in Wisconsin.

- La Crosse County received a \$100,000 implementation grant to expand the Wisconsin Chili Lunch event to increase the use of Wisconsin-grown foods across the lunch tray, develop supply chains for local products, and improve overall meal quality.
- The WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) received a \$98,457 implementation grant: *Wisconsin Dairy for Wisconsin Schools*. This grant will address the documented barriers to procuring local dairy products in K12 child nutrition programs, while providing much needed new markets for small and mid-sized dairy farmers. DATCP will work to make affordable and nutritious Wisconsin dairy products available for school food programs across the state.

## Updates from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) School Nutrition Team

### **Important: Changes to the Verification Collection Report for school year 2019-20**

The State of Wisconsin continues to participate in the USDA Demonstration Project for Evaluating Direct Certification with Medicaid Data for Free and Reduced Price Meals for school year (SY) 2019-20. Due to the evaluation piece of this demonstration project, we have modified the Verification Collection Report to **include 3-3a through 3-3e. If a student is receiving benefits through extended eligibility based on a sibling or household member matching on DC, they would also be included in 3-3a through 3-3e.**

We wanted to share this information early so you can be prepared when the portal opens to enter your information for the year. **In addition, we request that you share this information**

with your software companies to ensure they can make any modifications needed in your systems for smooth reporting.

<b>3-3: Students directly certified through other programs:</b> include those directly certified through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families ( <b>W2 Cash Benefits</b> ), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations ( <b>FDPIR</b> ) or Medicaid (if applicable); those documented as homeless, migrant, runaway, foster, Head Start, Pre-k Even Start, or non-applicant but approved by local officials. <b>DO NOT include FoodShare students already reported in 3-2.</b>	
3-3a: Students directly certified through FoodShare (SNAP) for FREE meals (S code).	
3-3b: Students directly certified through Cash Benefits (TANF) for FREE meals (T code).	
3-3c: Students directly certified through Medicaid for Free meals (M code).	
3-3d: Students directly certified through Other programs (e.g. homeless, migrant, runaway, foster, Head Start) (all other free codes).	
3-3e: Students directly certified through Medicaid for Reduced PRICE meals (Z code).	

## Great Beginnings Academy

The Great Beginnings Academy flyer and sign-up link are now on the School Nutrition [training webpage](#). This training is geared toward professionals who are new to their position as Food Service Director/Manager. For questions, please reach out to Molly Gregory at [molly.gregory@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:molly.gregory@dpi.wi.gov) or 608-267-9276.

## Reminder: USDA Final Rule titled *Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements*

On Wednesday, December 12, 2018, USDA published the Final Rule titled Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements. There were over 86,000 comments received by USDA. The flexibilities mentioned in this final rule must be in place at the start of the school year (SY) 2019-2020.

### *Milk Flexibility*

NSLP and SBP operators now have the option to offer flavored, low-fat milk (instead of just flavored, nonfat milk) but must also serve unflavored milk. In addition, for consistency purposes, the flavored, low-fat milk option will be extended to beverages for sale during the school day. This flexibility will also apply in the Special Milk Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program for participants ages six and older. There will no longer be the requirement of having to demonstrate a hardship.

### *Whole Grain-Rich Flexibility*

This final rule requires that at least half of the weekly grains offered in the NSLP and SBP meet the whole grain-rich criteria specified in USDA Food and Nutrition Service guidance, and that the remaining grain items offered must be enriched.

This decision is consistent with USDA's commitment to alleviate difficult regulatory requirements, simplify operational procedures, and provide SFAs adequate flexibility for local preferences. In addition, it will remove the need for whole grain-rich exemption request based on hardships.

The requirement of half of the weekly grains being whole grain-rich is intended to set a floor and not a ceiling; a minimum, not a maximum. We strongly encourage you to continue status quo if your students accept what you are currently serving. Why turn back?

### *Sodium Flexibility*

This final rule will provide more time for gradual sodium reduction by retaining Sodium Target 1 through the end of the SY 2023-2024. The Sodium Target 2 compliance is required in SY 2024-2025 and the Final Target has been eliminated.

USDA recognizes the need for further sodium reduction. The delayed implementation of Target 2 will ensure that USDA has enough time to make any regulatory adjustments based on the most current scientific recommendations as well as providing stakeholders with advance notice.

Do not let this stop you, though. If you have been proactively moving toward Target 2 and wish to continue to do so....Go for it!

The [DPI School Nutrition Team](#) is here to help with any questions/concerns you may have.

## Updates from the DPI AmeriCorps Farm to School Program

### Now Accepting Host Site Applications for the AmeriCorps Farm to School Grant

The Wisconsin DPI is still accepting host site applications for new partner sites across Wisconsin for the 2019-2020 AmeriCorps Farm to School (AC F2S) grant year. AmeriCorps is a national service program that engages over 80,000 members in service each year to solve pressing national problems through direct service and by mobilizing millions of volunteers for the organizations they serve. Members gain valuable professional, educational, and life benefits while having a lasting impact on their community. The AC F2S Program provides an innovative approach to building healthy communities by:

- Improving child nutrition through the implementation of educational F2S activities for students and families. These activities encourage healthy eating choices within an educational setting.
- Developing strong communities by creating future community leaders and connecting schools with local farmers and food businesses.
- Increasing the capacity of communities all over Wisconsin to support sustainable F2S programs that encourage healthy behaviors and improve the school food environment.

For more information about the [AC F2S program](#), please refer to the [new host site application](#). If you have questions about the program, you may contact Kara Ignasiak at 715-214-6080 or [kara.ignasiak@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:kara.ignasiak@dpi.wi.gov).