Indiana School and Community Nutrition Policy 2025-01

The Use of Artificial Intelligence

Purpose: To provide guidance for program operators using artificial intelligence (AI) with child nutrition programs overseen by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE).

Scope: School Food Authorities, Responsible Principals, and Responsible Individuals participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Summer Food Service Program, and Food Distribution Programs.

Description: While IDOE has issued guidance for schools on the increased use of AI in educating students, there are also situations where AI may be used to assist with the implementation of the various USDA nutrition programs. Whether this is using AI programs to develop menus, participate in nutrition-related meetings or administrative reviews, maintain recordkeeping requirements, help make more effective food purchasing decisions, or assist in problem solving the many requirements of program participation, there are considerations for program operators when utilizing AI as a tool. Points of consideration include:

- Ensuring that inputs into public-facing AI tools are free from student or child personal identifiable information (PII).
- Create a user policy to address best practices when making decisions about AI implementation.
- Follow state and federal policies regarding student data. Ensure compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) before using AI with students.

Children also have certain protections when their personal information is used to determine free or reduced meal eligibility. Section 9(b)(6) of the NSLA, 42 U.S.C.1758(b)(6) and regulations found at 7 CFR Part 245.6 explain the restrictions on the disclosure and use of information obtained from an application for free or reduced price meals, as well as the criminal penalties for improper release of information. Disclosure requirements also apply to student information obtained through the direct certification process. Program operators need to be mindful that any AI apps used or any partnerships with companies providing AI services do not violate protections under any of the above laws.

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Should institutions implement AI systems to assist with NSLA program operations, IDOE still holds those institutions accountable for compliance with all administrative and financial program responsibilities. IDOE will not review and approve use of any specific AI programs, nor will IDOE approve contracts with AI companies to oversee critical management responsibilities. Records that are created using AI software must still meet program requirements and be legible, accessible, and in a reviewable format for their assigned IDOE field specialist.

During administrative reviews or meetings with IDOE staff, the institution must seek approval before including any AI presence in the meetings. IDOE staff may request that AI applications be turned off during administrative reviews, technical assistance, or training sessions.

Sources: FERPA (20 USC 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), Disclosure of children's F&R eligibility information to education and certain other programs and individuals without parent consent (7 CFR 245.6(f)); Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) (16 CFR 312), USDA Eligibility Manual for School Meals, IDOE Digital Learning and Professional Development: https://www.in.gov/doe/educators/digital-learning/