



School Nutrition Programs

This weekly newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is dedicated to providing education, training, and technical assistance opportunities to school nutrition professionals, helping to ensure seamless operations for those participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Child Nutrition Programs. If you are the food service contact for your school or facility, please be certain that everyone on your team has access to this important information.

Tip of the Week

Submit New Directors to the Hiring Form
All new hires for the position of food service director need to be submitted to the [New Director Hiring Form](#). Directors moving from one district to another must be submitted, as well as those new to the position. Early submission and approval of these new hires will speed up the program year 2026 renewal application process.

Important Updates

School Year (SY) 2025-2026 Paid Lunch Equity (PLE)
USDA released Paid Lunch Equity: [Guidance for School Year 2025-2026](#) (For SY 2025-2026 the target weighted average price is \$4.01).

School food authorities (SFAs) with positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2024, are exempt from PLE pricing requirements found in [7 CFR 210.14\(e\)](#).

To demonstrate state agency oversight, USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) recommends that state agencies maintain documentation that includes which SFAs are using the PLE exemption for SY 2025-2026. This documentation should include a record that each SFA had a positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2024. This record could include documents such as a financial ledger or an attestation provided by the SFA. IDOE created an [Attestation Statement](#) for schools that wish to confirm their exempt status. Exempt SFAs may still use the PLE tool to complete the steps necessary to determine their target SY 2025-2026 paid lunch price, consistent with program regulations at 7 CFR 210.14(e), and adjust their paid lunch prices accordingly.

- [Attestation Statement for Exempt Schools](#)
- [2025-2026 PLE Tool Flow Chart](#)
- [PLE Tool SY 2025-2026](#)

For further information, please review our [financial management website](#), or email: SCNfiance@doe.in.gov (Please be sure to include your sponsor number and PLE Tool in the subject line)

Now Available: Free and Reduced Application and Notification Letter Templates
IDOE has updated the Free and Reduced Application for meals and special milk benefits, as well as the parent letter/instructions, the approval/denial letter templates, and the Direct Certification letter templates on the [Free and Reduced Forms webpage](#).

The application is a PDF with fillable space at the top and bottom for customization. The parent and notification letters are Google Docs. In order to update templates with contact information, click File and then Make a copy to revise, or click File and Download into your preferred file format.

- Important reminders:
- If distributing your own applications or letters, make sure the information matches the templates.
 - This year only English and Spanish-language applications are available, although Burmese and Haitian parent letters/instructions are still posted. Access applications translated into other languages [here](#).
 - If you aren't sure what language a household needs, use USDA's [I Speak Statements Card](#) to find out.
 - Applications cannot be distributed until Tuesday, July 1.
 - Best practice is to wait until Direct Certification is conducted for the new school year to reduce the administrative burden of processing applications.
 - All households must be notified of their ability to apply for benefits, if they haven't already been approved through Direct Certification.
 - If an online application is available, ensure there is a paper option available for households to use if they prefer that method.
 - Updated income guidelines are available [here](#).

Now Available: Alternate Application for Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Operators
While SFAs that implement CEP are not required to process free and reduced applications for meal benefits, they are highly encouraged to process alternate applications in order to qualify their schools and students for other programs and opportunities that rely on individual free and reduced eligibility.

- Important reminders:
- When distributing alternate applications, CEP SFAs must inform households that their eligibility determination will have no impact on the free breakfasts and lunches their students receive.
 - The school food service account cannot be used to cover the costs associated including labor, technology, and materials. Funds from a non-federal account (such as the general fund) must cover these administrative costs.
 - Direct Certification and the alternate application for free and reduced benefits are the only methods SFAs can use to determine individual free and reduced eligibility. Locally created applications, household self-reporting, or other unapproved methods cannot be used.

Access the application, parent letter/instructions, and notification letters on the [CEP webpage](#). Check out the [Alternate Application fact sheet](#) for more instructions and frequently asked questions.

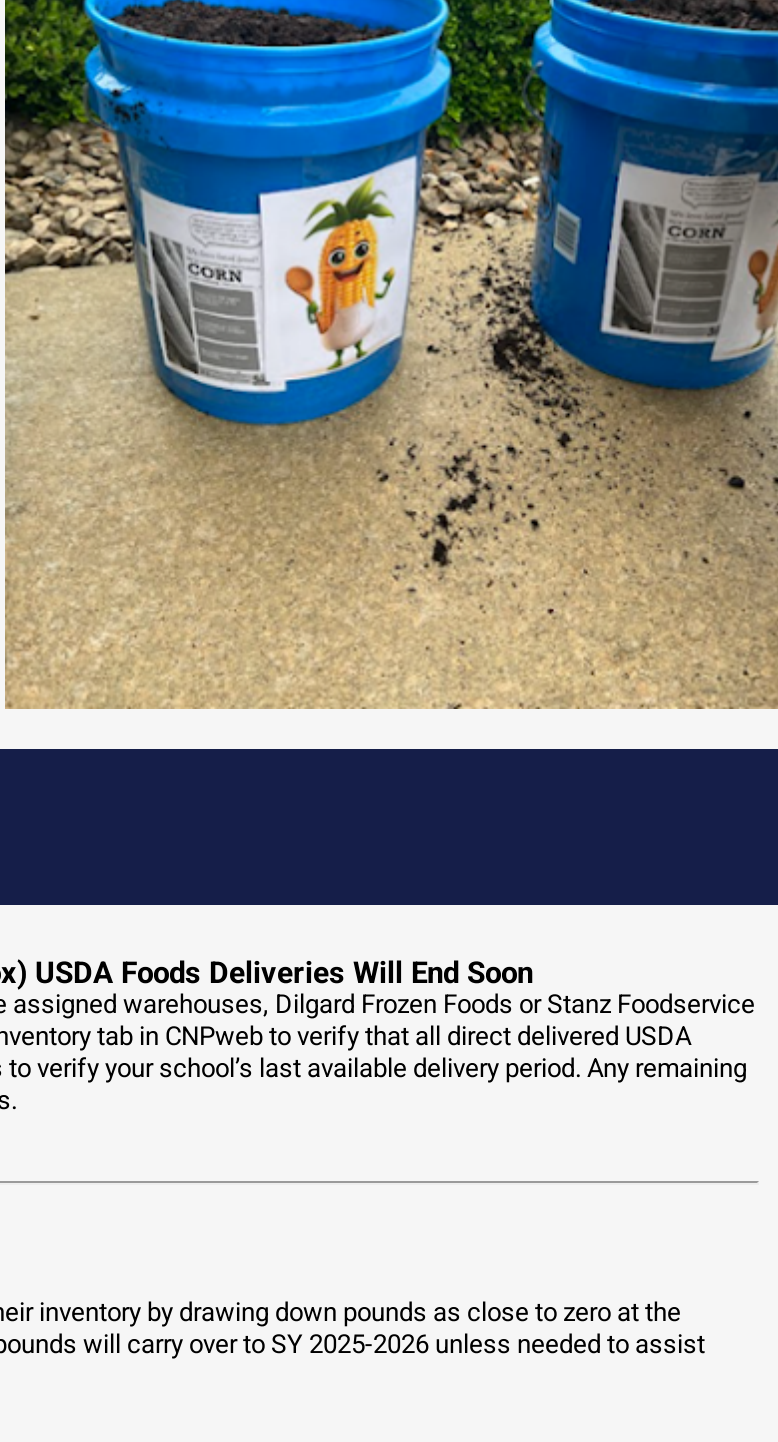
Farm to School

Apple Crunch Registration Now Open
The Indiana Apple Crunch encourages healthy eating and celebrates National Farm to School Month each October by encouraging Indiana schools, businesses, youth organizations, and groups to purchase local apples and CRUNCH together. Hosts of Crunch sites organize the big Crunch along with other Apple-themed activities. Pick a day in October, start thinking about where you will buy your apples, and what you want to do to have a crunchtastic event! Registration can be found [here](#). IDOE will send out toolkits with ideas of how to participate in August.

Cultivating Success
Join Indiana Grown for Schools on Thursday, June 26, at 1 p.m. ET for an interactive and engaging webinar that will provide participants with the ultimate blueprint for building a thriving farm to school program! Dive deep into crafting a robust project plan that sets operators up for success. Discover the secrets to forging strong partnerships with key stakeholders to amplify impact. The presenter will share proven strategies for overcoming common obstacles and measuring program success. Register [here](#) and let's grow together.

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School Highlight: Shelbyville Central Schools
Shelbyville Central is teaming up with their summer feeding sites to help take care of their corn crop over the summer. After the corn is planted, the children will water the plants and take pictures to monitor growth. This is a great way to incorporate a summer program into Food Day. Many times, school gardens are challenging as students and staff go home during the summer. However, incorporating garden maintenance and monitoring into your summer programming can create a great opportunity for school/summer partnership.



USDA Foods

School Year (SY) 2024-2025 Direct Delivered (Brown Box) USDA Foods Deliveries Will End Soon
Direct Delivered USDA Foods deliveries, which are delivered by state assigned warehouses, Dilgard Frozen Foods or Stanz Foodservice will end on or before Monday, June 30. Please check your school's inventory tab in CNPweb to verify that all direct delivered USDA Foods have been ordered. Also, check your school's delivery periods to verify your school's last available delivery period. Any remaining USDA Foods inventory will be swept and reallocated to other schools.

USDA Foods Pounds Remaining at Processors
School Food Authorities (SFAs) should make every effort to utilize their inventory by drawing down pounds as close to zero at the processing companies by Monday, June 30. Any remaining unused pounds will carry over to SY 2025-2026 unless needed to assist other schools.

Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program Funds
The last day to place a produce order in FFAVORS for SY 2024-2025 is Monday, June 30. Schools must enter their Department of Defense (DoD) Program receipts into the Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Order Receipt System ([FFAVORS](#)) within two calendar days after the produce is delivered to your school. All USDA DoD receipts must be entered into ([FFAVORS](#)) by Monday, June 30, or before leaving for summer break. All DoD funds must be used by Monday, June 30. Any unused funds do not carry over to the next school year and will be lost.

USDA Foods Recipes
Use your USDA Foods [refried beans 100362](#) for this [refried bean and cheese tostadas](#) recipe. This recipe may need to be adjusted to meet serving sizes and meal patterns.



Training and Webinar Opportunities

Free and Reduced Training Series
Free and reduced meal benefits processors must be trained annually. The following training series will meet the requirements. For details on each webinar and to register, visit [here](#).

- Free and Reduced Preparation on Thursday, June 19, at 10 a.m. ET
- Direct Certification (DC) Basics on Thursday, July 10, at 10 a.m. ET and Thursday, July 31, at 3 p.m. (Repeat session)
- Free and Reduced Application Processing on Thursday, July 10, at 1 p.m. ET and Tuesday, July 29, at 10 a.m. ET (Repeat session)
- New day and time! Processing Possible Matches on Thursday, July 17, at 10 a.m. ET
 - Due to a schedule conflict, this session was changed.
- Eligibility Disclosure on Tuesday, July 22, at 2 p.m. ET
- Verification for Cause on Thursday, July 24, at 10 a.m. ET

Please note: Artificial Intelligence (AI) notetakers must be disabled when attending an online training webinar or meeting hosted by IDOE's School and Community Support team. For more information, view our AI policy [here](#).

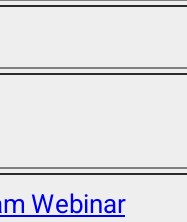
Reminders

Civil Rights and Ethics Training Courses: Please Print Certificates from Moodle
Sponsors are required to take civil rights and ethics training courses annually. Given this annual requirement, IDOE will be conducting a reset of these courses for program year (PY) 2026 in Moodle. The reset will delete the past year's learner history in these two courses. Please ensure all certificates for the training have been saved for your corporation. Print or save the civil rights and ethics course certificates no later than Friday, June 27. Certificates can be accessed through the Moodle account of the person who took the course.

Indirect Cost Updated Guidance
Effective October 1, 2024, the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate for unrestricted grants is not applicable to school corporations, public or non-public. Since private or non-public school corporations do not have a source of data being reported to the Office of School Finance, an unrestricted indirect cost rate cannot be calculated moving forward. Due to this, School Nutrition Programs are no longer able to approve indirect costs for non-public or private school corporations moving forward. Please review the [Indirect Cost Frequently Asked Questions](#) resource for more information.

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Election Period – Now through Monday, June 30
CEP Election period is open now through Monday, June 30. Reach out to your assigned school nutrition programs field specialist for any questions or for assistance in determining potential eligibility. CEP allows high-poverty schools to provide breakfast and lunch free to all students, ensuring that they are well nourished and able to learn throughout the school day. Additional information and the application for community eligibility is available on [IDOE's website](#). Determination of eligibility is made using the local school corporation's actual Direct Certification and enrollment data as of around April 1, 2025. The application deadline to participate in CEP for the 2025-2026 school is Monday, June 30.

Upcoming Dates



Thursday, June 19	Free and Reduced Preparation webinar
Monday, June 23 through Wednesday, June 25	ISNL at Lebanon Community Schools (in-person)
Thursday, June 26	Cultivating Success: Your Blueprint for a Thriving Farm to School Program Webinar
Friday, June 27	Last day to pull Civil Rights and Ethics training certificates from PY 2025 in Moodle
Monday, June 30	CEP Application Final Due Date
Tuesday, July 8	IDOE Back to School Training (in-person)
Thursday, July 10	Direct Certification Basics Webinar and Free and Reduced Application Processing Webinar
Tuesday, July 15 through Friday, July 18	ISNL Online Option