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School Nutrition Programs Newsletter from the Indiana Department of Education



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Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

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

Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) Reminders

Meal counts should be taken at the point of service by the classroom teacher or staff. The point of service is where it can be accurately determined that students have been served all required components for a reimbursable meal. USDA does not allow meal counts to be determined by student attendance, the number of meals sent to the classroom, or the number of meals returned from the classroom.

The classroom teacher and staff should be properly trained on what makes a reimbursable meal, including offer versus serve training, if applicable, the process in place for taking meal counts, and Civil Rights training. Students cannot take meal counts. Visit [IDOE's school breakfast webpage](#) for more information.

Important Updates

Spend Down Plan Guidance Updated

In an effort to decrease the administrative burden, starting school year 2024-2025, sponsors will only be required to have a spend down plan for the Nonprofit School Food Service Account if the ending balance of the 2024 Annual Financial Report (AFR) is above the calculated **six-month average operating cost**. Please see the calculation below:

Total Food Service Operating Expenses ÷ Number of Operating Months = Average Monthly Expenses

Average Monthly Expenses x 6 = Six-Month Average Operating cost

Previously, sponsors were required to have a spend down plan if the ending balance of the AFR was higher than the calculated three-month operating cost. For more information about the spend down plan calculation, allowable cost ideas and more, review spend down plan ideas for excess fund balance guidance found [here](#). Questions about spend down plans or excess funds can be sent to SCNfinance@doe.in.gov.

Farm to School



School Highlight

Portage Township Schools are running three hydroponic units. Students have hands-on learning opportunities to help run these units and learn all about soil-free systems and the light, temperature, pH, and nutrients these plants need. When they have a harvest, they use the lettuce on the serving lines, for taste tests, and in student labs.

Youth Garden Grant

Since 1982, the Youth Garden Grant has supported school and youth educational garden projects that enhance the quality of life for youth and their communities.

Any organization in the U.S. planning a new or improving an existing garden program that serves at least 15 youth between the ages of infancy and 18 years old is eligible to apply for up to \$500. Apply [here](#) by Friday, December 13.

FY 2025 Farm to School Grant Office Hours

The USDA Farm to School team is offering office hours to answer questions from applicants and provide technical assistance on the [FY 2025 Farm to School Grant](#). Applications must be submitted by Friday, January 10, 2025.

- Wednesday, December 18, from 3 to 4 p.m. ET. [Register here](#).
- Tuesday, January 7, from 2 to 3 p.m. ET. [Register here](#).

We Want Your Feedback

Did you participate in Indiana Food Day or Indiana Apple Crunch? Please take a few minutes to complete the following feedback forms so we can build better promotional events next year. Find the Indiana Food Day survey [here](#), and the Indiana Apple Crunch survey [here](#).

USDA Foods

Processing Poultry Pounds Forecasting Tool

There is a new forecasting tool available on IDOE's Food Distribution Program [forecasting](#) webpage. The [USDA Foods: Processing Poultry Pounds](#) video discusses what poultry processing is, dark and white meat balances, bid solicitations, and tracking and monitoring poultry pounds. Remember that forecasting for the 2025-2026 school year annual pre-order forecast survey should begin now.

Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Allocation Requests for School Year 2025-2026

The time has come to submit your school's allocation requests for next school year. Schools must complete the appropriate form that applies to your School Food Authority. The deadline for submission is Friday, December 13, at 5 p.m. ET. Remember that DoD allocations are deducted from your school's USDA Foods entitlement before the annual pre-order survey opens.

- Click [here](#) if your school is currently on the DoD Fresh Program for school year 2024-2025.
- Click [here](#) if your school is NOT currently on the DoD Fresh Program for school year 2024-2025.
- For more information on the DoD Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program, please visit [IDOE's DoD Fresh Website](#) and/or view IDOE's three-part DoD series in [Moodle](#).

Remember to Receipt in FFAVORS

Schools should be receipting their DoD produce receipts into FFAVORS within five calendar days after the produce delivery.

USDA Foods Recipes

Use your USDA Foods frozen [turkey breast](#), [turkey roasts](#) and frozen or canned vegetables to prepare this variation of [turkey vegetable soup](#). This recipe must be adjusted to serving sizes and meal patterns.

Reminders

Training Needs Survey

Help IDOE plan for future training by sharing input on your needs by filling out this [survey](#), which will take fewer than five minutes to complete. We appreciate your input.

Updated: Team Nutrition's "Offering Meats and Meat Alternates at School Breakfast" Training Guide

Team Nutrition's "Offering Meats and Meat Alternates at School Breakfast" training guide has been updated to be consistent with the Final Rule, "[Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)." The final rule allows schools the option to offer grains, meats/meat alternates, or a combination of both at breakfast. This [20-page training guide](#) shows school nutrition professionals how to offer meats and meat alternates at school breakfast by providing menu planning ideas, crediting information, sample menus, and more.

Updates from Our Partners

Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) Recognition Awards Informational Webinar

The [HMI Recognition Awards](#) recognize and share best practices from school food authorities (SFA) who made operational changes to improve the nutritional quality of their school meals, as well as SFAs who engage students and families in nutrition education and in the planning and preparation of nutritious school meals. SFAs meeting Recognition Award criteria will receive national and local recognition, as well as an awardee toolkit that includes digital assets, and travel stipends to attend a national Healthy Meals Summit.

Register [here](#) for a webinar on Tuesday, December 10, that will provide information about eligibility, the application process, technical assistance, and more.

'Milk is Local' Kit from American Dairy Association Indiana

Did you know that fresh dairy milk is the one of the most local products that you serve to your students? With an average of 48 hours from farm to cafeteria, the milk that you serve daily is not only local, but fresh. Join the American Dairy Association Indiana in amplifying this message with our 'Milk is Local' Kit. Use the pieces to share the milk is local message to your students while also encouraging them to choose this nutrient dense option for each meal. Turn your cafeteria into a classroom! Order your kit [here](#).

Upcoming Dates



Tuesday, December 10	HMI recognition awards informational webinar. Register here .
Friday, December 13	Deadline to apply for the Youth Garden Grant.
Friday, December 13, at 5 p.m. ET	Deadline to submit DoD Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program allocation requests for the 2025-2026 school year
Wednesday, December 18, from 3 to 4 p.m. ET	USDA FY 2025 Farm to School Grant office hours: register here
Tuesday, January 7, from 2 to 3 p.m. ET	USDA FY 2025 Farm to School Grant office hours: register here
Friday, January 10	Application deadline for FY 2025 Farm to School Grants

Additional Resources

- [School Nutrition Programs Calendar](#)
- [IDOE's Nutrition webpage](#)
- [CNPweb](#)



Department News

- 11/12/24 Intentional Investments in Summer Math and Reading Support Show Return on Investment for Students
- 11/08/24 Indiana Schools Recognized for Commitment to Service Members, Veterans and Families

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