



ILLINOIS
STATE BOARD OF
EDUCATION

THE OUTLOOK

A Monthly Newsletter for School Nutrition Programs

LAUNCHING IN 2024

SUMMER EBT

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 ([P.L. 117-328](#)) authorized the permanent, nationwide Summer EBT program beginning in 2024. The federally funded program will provide grocery-buying benefits to low-income families with school-aged children when schools are closed for the summer.

Eligible students will receive a one-time benefit of \$120 per summer on an Electronic Benefit Transfer card to purchase food for each school-age child who is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

ISBE, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) will implement this program, with support from National School Lunch Program (NSLP) participating schools. The federal program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). These benefits will help ensure that students have a hunger-free



ISBE "Summer EBT and Illinois Schools – Summer 2024" Webinars

- [March 6 recording](#)
- [March 20 recording](#)
- [April 17 registration](#)

summer and return to school well-nourished and ready to learn.

School Food Authorities (SFAs) should review [ISBE's initial guidance online](#), which answers who is eligible for Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT) and other common questions.

We also ask that sponsors review the first two ISBE "Summer EBT and Illinois Schools – Summer 2024" webinar recordings and register for our next one set for April 17. The links are available on the [agency's new Summer EBT webpage](#) along with other resources, including a link to the USDA's

Summer EBT website.

SFAs can email sebt@isbe.net with questions. Households should [contact IDHS](#) for questions about benefit issuance, including lost or stolen cards. Families can learn about program basics on the [USDA's Information for Families webpage](#).



The new Summer EBT program is also sometimes referred to as Sun Bucks.

Summer Meals

Are you looking for information about **Summer Meals**? Our March 5 [ISBE School Nutrition Programs Update](#) included a segment on the **Summer Food Service Program** and **Seamless Summer Option**.

NEWS BITES

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The [Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool \(PSTTT\)](#) has gotten a refresh. Employee users will see graphic images of their progress towards meeting annual training requirements along with their Achievement Badges. Manager and Director users will also see employee training progress and the historical completion rate. Visit the PSTTT today and check out the new look!

ISBE SNP UPDATES

Join Nutrition Department staff for updates on School Nutrition Programs! We'll



cover important reminders and hot topics. Attendees can submit questions during the presentation for a question-and-answer session at the conclusion of the webinar. This is a webinar series. Please register for each one individually that you would like to attend at <https://register.gotowebinar.com/rt/1693915743647517015>. Webinars are scheduled for 2-3 p.m. Monday, April 1, and 2-3 p.m. Monday, May 6.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

The American Commodity Distribution Association's annual conference is set for April 21-24 in St. Louis. ACDA is a non-profit professional association devoted to the improvement of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) commodity distribution system. [Read more about the association and the conference online.](#)

FFVP Application Available in WINS

The ISBE Nutrition Department is accepting applications for eligible schools to participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program in School Year 2024-25.

The [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#) is a federally assisted program providing free fresh fruits and vegetables to children at eligible elementary schools during the school day. The goal of FFVP is to introduce children to fresh fruits and vegetables, to include new and different varieties, and to increase overall acceptance and consumption of fresh, unprocessed produce among children. FFVP also encourages healthier school environments by promoting nutrition education.

Program Eligibility: Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program that have 50% or greater free and reduced-price eligibility percentage and serve students enrolled in grades 8 or below are eligible to apply. Schools with the highest free and reduced-price eligibility percentage have the greatest chance of being selected for the program. Potential applicants should review the [USDA's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program: A Handbook for Schools](#) to ensure an understanding of program requirements. Applicants must provide assurance they will operate FFVP in accordance with the program guidelines.

Application Submission and Deadline: Sponsors with eligible schools

that wish to participate should access the FFVP application link in the "Sponsor Tasks" tab in their Program Year 2024 School Nutrition Programs

Application in WINS and refer to the [application instructions](#). FFVP applications must be **completed no later than April 30, 2024**, for consideration. Sponsors will be notified via email, within approximately 90 days from the application deadline, on whether their schools are selected

for the program. If selected, schools must be prepared to begin the program at the start of School Year 2024-25.

School Selection: Selection of schools for participation in FFVP is determined by priority given to elementary schools with the highest free and reduced-price eligibility percentage. Schools that have the same free and reduced-price eligibility percentage are ranked from lowest to highest enrollment to allow the maximum number of schools to be allocated funding. Funding for this program is limited. The number of schools selected will depend on the amount of funding provided for the program year.

Additional information can be found on ISBE's [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program webpage](#).

Questions about the program or the application can be directed to Emily Durbin at edurbin@isbe.net or (217) 782-2491.



Submit Your Nomination!

Does your district have a dynamic food service director, a cashier that puts smiles on all the students' faces, a super creative cook, or an administrative assistant that knows all the ins and outs of the School Nutrition Programs regulations?

The Illinois State Board of Education Nutrition Department wants to hear about them! We are seeking nominations for the ISBE School Nutrition Champion Award.

Anyone can nominate a K-12 school nutrition professional for the ISBE School Nutrition Champion Award. This includes students, parents, community members, and other district and school staff.

School nutrition professionals employed at public or private schools in Illinois with the National School Lunch Program are eligible for the award.

To nominate someone today, [complete the form available online](#). Tell us who you are, who you are nominating, tell us about their career history/qualifications (250 words), and how they go above and beyond (500 words).

The deadline for nominations is 5 p.m. April 15, 2024.



SCHOOL NUTRITION CHAMPION AWARD

One School Nutrition Champion will be selected but all nominees will be highlighted in The Outlook, our monthly newsletter for School Nutrition Programs in Illinois.

The winner will be announced on [School Lunch Hero Day](#), which is May 3, 2024 .

Meet last year's award-winner on ISBE's [School Nutrition and Wellness Champions webpage](#) and all of the nominees in the [May 2023 issue of The Outlook](#).

CEP Application Period Opens

The application period is now open for the Community Eligibility Provision, which is known as CEP for short. It begins today and ends June 30, 2024.

If you are looking for basics on the program, we encourage you to watch the [U.S. Department of Agriculture's CEP 101 webinar](#).

In case you missed it, a recording of our March 28 webinar is also now available online. This webinar is specific to Illinois and operating CEP for School Year 2024-25. It is an overview of the CEP requirements as well as our online CEP Evaluation and Application Module.

The [U.S. Department of Agriculture has lowered the minimum identified student percentage eligibility percentage to 25%](#), down from 40%. This means more schools will qualify to operate CEP but districts will still need to carefully consider the economic feasibility of the program since reimbursements for a district operating CEP vary based on the identified student percentage. Just because you qualify now does not mean it may be the best choice for your district.

CEP is an alternative to collecting, approving, and verifying Household Eligibility Applications for free and re-

duced price eligible students in high poverty local educational agencies (LEAs) for schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Students at CEP schools are offered reimbursable breakfast and lunch for no charge. Districts are reimbursed based on their identified student percentage.

For more information, visit our CEP webpage at www.isbe.net/cep, where you can find evaluation worksheets, outreach data, and other resources such as the [CEP Evaluation & Application Module Quick Reference Guide](#).



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Announcements, Events, & Deadlines

- **April** – National Garden Month (Resource Highlight: [Using Gardens to Grow Healthy Habits in Cafeterias, Classrooms, and Cafeterias](#))
- **April 1** – [ISBE School Nutrition Programs Update](#)
- **April 4** – International Carrot Day ([Recipe Highlight: Carrot Raisin Salad](#))
- **April 10** – [“Summer EBT and Illinois Schools – Summer 2024”](#)
- **April 15** – [ISBE School Nutrition Champion Award nomination deadline](#)
- **April 21-24** – [American Commodity Distribution Association annual conference](#) in St. Louis
- **April 22-26** – [38th National Child Nutrition Conference](#)
- **April 26** – Stop Food Waste Day (Resource Highlight: [What Can You Do to Help Prevent Wasted Food](#))
- **May 27** – ISBE offices closed for Memorial Day

Please note this is not a complete list of Nutrition Department events, meetings, and deadlines. Visit us online at www.isbe.net/nutrition.

Nondiscrimination Statement

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

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