

# THE OUTLOOK

A Monthly Newsletter for School Nutrition Programs

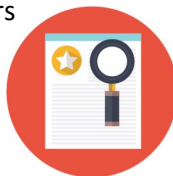


## PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

As we approach the end of the school year, school nutrition professionals will want to make sure they have reached the minimum annual training requirements. School nutrition directors not only have their own annual training requirements, but they also oversee annual training requirements for managers and staff.

Annual training hours for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs vary by job category:

- **School Nutrition Directors:** 12 hours
- **Managers:** 10 hours
- **All Other Staff (working 20 hours or more per week):** 6 hours
- **Part-Time Staff (working less than 20 hours per week):** 4 hours



Annual training requirements apply to the 12 months between July 1 and June 30. Mid-year hires in all categories (Jan. 1 or later) must receive at least one-half of training requirement for each job category. Training hours completed in excess of the minimum requirement in one school year may be applied to either the immediately previous or immediately following school year.

Training must be job-specific and intended to help employees perform their school nutrition program duties well. Training is measured in hours and may include shorter increments of time. We suggest at least 15 minutes per training segment. Training needs are best assessed by an employee in consultation with his or her manager, director, or the state agency.

The ISBE Nutrition Department reviews training documentation during the Administrative Review. Records that list the employee name, employer/school, training

title, topic/objectives, training source, dates and total training hours would be appropriate to demonstrate compliance with annual training requirements. Records must be maintained and made available to the state agency upon request. You may keep the records electronically in a local database, in paper files, or through the USDA Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool (<https://pstrainingtracker.fns.usda.gov>). Individual employees can use ISBE's [Annual Training Requirement Tracker](#).

Training may be obtained in many ways, such as in-person or online classes, local meetings, webinars, or conferences.

Here are some upcoming trainings and resources to make sure you have the required training:

- Register to attend the [2026 ISBE School Wellness Conference in Normal](#) (May 4-6). The conference includes a Nutrition session track.
- Save the dates for the **2026 School Nutrition Training**, which is set for June 24-25 in Springfield. Watch for details under [What's New?](#) on the main ISBE Nutrition Department webpage.
- View On-Demand Trainings on the [SNP Training and Professional Standards webpage](#). Recorded trainings include those on Direct Certification, Household Eligibility Applications, the Food Distribution Program, and more!

We recommend reviewing the USDA's [Guide to Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs](#) and ISBE's [School Nutrition Programs Administrative Handbook](#) (Section J includes a summary of the Professional Standards).

# NEWS BITES

## COMING UP!

The Culinary Institute of Child Nutrition webinar series continues on April 2 with a “Spotlight on Breakfast Kiosks and Second Chance Breakfast.” The hour-long presentation is scheduled from 2-3 p.m. CST. Register on the [Institute of Child Nutrition website](#).

## USDA SURVEY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service is conducting a web survey of all school food authorities that operate the National School Lunch Program. Sponsors should have received a recent email from [usda-fns-sfasurvey@qemailserver.com](mailto:usda-fns-sfasurvey@qemailserver.com). If you have any questions, e-mail [cnsurveys@usda.gov](mailto:cnsurveys@usda.gov).

## TO: FOOD SERVICE DIRECTORS

Thank you to the food service directors who have completed the Nutrition Policy Institute Survey distributed on March 16 by the ISBE Nutrition Department. If you have not completed the survey, there is still time to contribute to the important research; [get started with the survey link](#). The deadline is April 6.

## SCHOOL LUNCH HERO DAY

Plan something special for School Lunch Hero Day, which is May 1! Visit the [School Nutrition Association webpage](#) for inspiration and resources. It is the perfect time to thank your school nutrition professionals.

# PROCUREMENT



CORNER

**DID YOU KNOW?** School Food Authorities (SFAs) using funds from federal Child Nutrition Programs must adhere to procurement requirements established in [2 CFR 200](#) and [7 CFR 210](#), applying the correct purchasing threshold to ensure fair competition, transparency, and responsible use of public funds. As of Oct. 1, 2025, the [federal purchasing thresholds](#) are defined as follows:

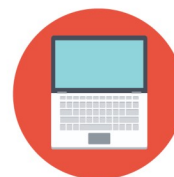
- [Micro-purchase threshold](#) – annual aggregate amount under \$15,000.
- [Small/Informal purchase threshold](#) – annual aggregate amount between \$15,001 to \$350,000.
- [Large/Formal purchase threshold](#) – annual aggregate amount over \$350,000

Notably, contracts for a Food Service Management Company must always be procured through a formal process, regardless of cost, in accordance with the [ISBE three-step procurement process](#). Because state and local agencies may set stricter (lower) thresholds, SFAs should routinely review and update their internal procurement procedures to ensure full compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

Review your internal procurement procedures to ensure all procurements during this bid season are conducted in full compliance.

# CEP Application Period Open April 1 to June 30

In case you missed it, a recording of the ISBE Nutrition Department’s webinar on the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is available at [www.isbe.net/cep](http://www.isbe.net/cep).



The presentation provided an overview of the CEP requirements as well as the online CEP Evaluation and Application Module.

The CEP application for SY 26-27 opened April 1 and will close on June 30.

CEP is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. CEP allows the nation’s highest poverty schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications.

# Consider SUN Meals To-Go

The ISBE Nutrition Department is teaming up with No Kid Hungry to present a 2026 Illinois SUN Meals To-Go Webinar Series.

This series will provide the tools and resources to build a successful SUN Meals To-Go program to feed children in your community this summer.

These are the sessions offered:

- **Feb. 19:** SUN Meals To-Go 101
- **March 5:** Building an Annual SMTG Plan
- **March 12:** Ensuring Program Financial Feasibility
- **March 19:** Menu Planning & Access to USDA Foods
- **March 26:** Outreach & Communications Plans
- **April 9:** SFSP Sponsor Application Process
- **April 16:** Documentation Requirement
- **April 30:** Office Hours

## What's New for Summer Meals

- [Order, Download, and Print Summer Meals Marketing Materials](#)
- [SFSP New Sponsor Deadline is May 1](#)
- [SFSP FAQs for Potential Sponsors and Sites](#)
- [Get the SFSP Facts: Who Can Be a Sponsor, Types of Sites, and More!](#)
- [USDA Releases 2026 Reimbursement Rates for SFSP](#)
- [Order "And Justice for All" Posters](#)

All webinars are scheduled to start at 2 p.m. Registration is underway; [just click here to sign up for the Zoom webinars.](#)

If you missed a session, email [summermeals@isbe.net](mailto:summermeals@isbe.net) to request access to recordings.

SUN Meals To-Go is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that helps rural communities reach more children with nutritious meals during summer.

The SUN Meals To-Go Program can be

implemented by approved program sponsors under the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) or by schools participating in the National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option (SSO) in designated rural areas.

Meals can be distributed through pick-up or delivery to homes.

Visit the ISBE Summer Food Service Program webpage for more information, including the [SUN Meals To-Go Fact Sheet](#).

## Contract Renewal Deadline Reminder

This reminder is for sponsors who currently have a food service management company (FSMC) contract or vended meals contract that contains the option to renew the existing contract at least one more year. If you are conducting a new procurement instead of renewing your contract or you do not have such type of contract you may disregard this notice.

The ISBE Nutrition Department emailed the required Contract Renewal Agreement Form and instructions directly to the Authorized Representative listed in WINS. If you have not received the guidance, please [visit our website](#) to obtain a copy. Please do not use old renewal forms.

School Food Authority (SFA) contracts that do have the option and plan to renew their contract for next school year must submit the renewal forms to ISBE for review and approval prior to the date their current contract expires.

Once complete, please send a copy of the contract renewal along with any other applicable documents to [nutritionprocurement@isbe.net](mailto:nutritionprocurement@isbe.net) for the required ISBE review and approval by May 15.

**Failure to submit the required contract renewal forms by May 15 may result in a mandatory re-solicitation and/or the inability to use federal Child Nutrition Program funds to pay for goods and/or services rendered without the state agency approval as required in [7 CFR 210.16](#).**



**Illinois State  
Board of Education  
Nutrition Department**

100 N. First St.  
Springfield, IL 62777  
Phone: (800) 545-7892  
Fax: (217) 524-6124  
Email: [cnp@isbe.net](mailto:cnp@isbe.net)  
Web: [www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net)

## Announcements, Events, & Deadlines

- **April 1** – [ISBE School Nutrition Programs Update](#)
- **April 30** – National Raisin Day (Try [Carrot Raisin Salad!](#))
- **May** – National Egg Month (Try [Easy Cheesy Breakfast Bake!](#))
- **May** – National Salad Month (Try [Ginger Citrus Noodle Salad!](#))
- **May** – National Strawberry Month (Try [Rise 'n' Shine Strawberry Oats!](#))
- **May** – National Salsa Month (Try [Fruit Salsa!](#))
- **May 1** – [School Lunch Hero Day](#)
- **May 4-6** – [ISBE School Wellness Conference in Normal](#)
- **May 21** – Eat More Fruits and Vegetables Day
- **May 25** – Memorial Day (ISBE offices closed)
- **June 1** – World Milk Day
- **June 19** – Juneteenth (ISBE offices closed)
- **June 24-25** – [2026 School Nutrition Training in Springfield](#)

*Please note this is not a complete list of events, meetings, and deadlines. Visit the ISBE Nutrition Department at [www.isbe.net/nutrition](http://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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

