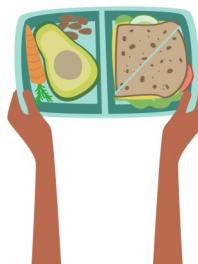




THE OUTLOOK

A Monthly Newsletter for School Nutrition Programs



ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW REFRESHER

A LOOK AT MENUS

School Nutrition Programs
Administrative Reviews are conducted to assess compliance with the federal meal programs. A little preparation can go a long way in making the process smooth and stress free. A large part of the review process is the meal components and quantities section, which allows the state agency to verify that reimbursable meals meet all federal meal pattern requirements.

The monitor assigned to your review will select one month of menus to review at a high level. During this phase, they are confirming that all five required meal components are offered each day. The goal here is to ensure that the menu, as planned, meets the NSLP meal pattern and provides students with access to all required components throughout the month.

Within that same month, you will work with your monitor to select one specific week for a more detailed analysis. This is where documentation becomes especially important. The selected week is used to verify the portion size for each component, determine how each food item contributes to the meal pattern, and assess if you are meeting both the daily and weekly requirements.

RESOURCES

- [Monitoring and Review Information](#)
- [“Preparing for an Administrative Review” Resource Guide](#)
- [SFAs Tentatively Selected for SY 25-26 Administrative Review](#)
- [SNP AR Checklist](#)
 - ◆ [Districtwide CEP](#)

To complete the menu review, your monitor will request supporting documentation for the selected week. Be prepared to provide:

- **Production records** – must contain the specific foods/ condiments used, recipe or product name, grade groups, portion sizes, student and total projected servings, amount of food used, and the number of leftovers.
- **Child Nutrition (CN) labels or Product Formulation Statements (PFS)** – required for all processed and combination foods.
- **Standardized recipes** – must include ingredient amounts, yields, portion sizes, and crediting information.
- **Nutrition Facts labels** – to verify nutrient information and ingredients

Having these documents organized and readily accessible can significantly streamline the review process. State monitoring is designed to support program integrity and success. With thoughtful preparation, the menu review can be a straightforward and collaborative process.

NEWS BITES

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

The **2026 ISBE School Nutrition Training** is set for June 24-25 at the Crowne Plaza Springfield. Watch for details on the [SNP Training and Professional Standards webpage](#), where you can browse PDFs of last year's presentations to get an idea of some of the possible sessions.

ISBE WEBINAR SERIES

ISBE Nutrition Department staff will present a webinar on the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) from 9:30-11 a.m. on March 26. [Registration is underway online](#). The CEP application opens April 1 and closes June 30 for SY 26-27.

ABCs OF SCHOOL NUTRITION

[Registration is underway](#) for **“Serve It Safely Food Handler Training”** online. The University of Illinois Extension will present the free training on March 10. This training is approved by the Illinois Department of Public Health; participants will receive a certificate good for three years. You can also [register for a Feb. 10 webinar on “Food Allergies in School Nutrition.”](#)

SAVE THE DATES!

[Register to attend](#) the **2026 ISBE School Wellness Conference**, which is set for May 4-6 at the Bloomington-Normal Marriott Hotel & Conference Center. The event will include keynote speakers, a pre-conference workshop on May 4, breakout sessions, and more!

PROCUREMENT



CORNER

DID YOU KNOW? When School Food Authorities (SFAs) make purchases using federal School Nutrition Program funds, they must follow procurement rules outlined in [2 CFR 200](#) and [7 CFR 210](#) using the appropriate purchasing threshold ([Micro-purchase](#), [Small/Informal purchase](#), [Large/formal purchase](#)). Effective Oct. 1, 2025, the [federal purchasing thresholds](#) have increased to the following:

- Micro-purchase threshold – increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000 and;
- Small/Informal purchase threshold – increased from \$250,000 to \$350,000.

State and local agencies possess the authority to set lower micro-purchase and small/informal purchase thresholds. Add updating internal procurement procedures to reflect the regulation updates to your February to-do list.

Local Foods for Schools Update

Here is the [Local Food for Schools \(LFS\) Participating School Food Authority \(SFA\) Listing](#). This list includes actively participating SFAs. The SFAs not on this list are no longer eligible to participate in LFS.

- LFS will end June 30, 2026.
- ISBE is no longer able to approve requests for additional funds or pay overclaim amounts.
- Any LFS purchases that are above and beyond your SFA's pre-approved LFS allotment will be the responsibility of the SFA. SFAs should be tracking their allotment and their purchases in order to ensure that they do not go over their allotment. Please utilize the [LFS Funding and Data Tracking Tool](#) to help track your SFAs available balance.

- If additional funds become available we will notify eligible SFAs.
- If your SFA is on the list linked above and you will NOT be utilizing any more of your LFS funds, please reach out to localfoods@isbe.net so that we can reallocate those funds.

Local Ground Beef Purchase

- The ISBE board approved us to procure frozen raw local ground beef with LFS funds for distribution to schools participating in NSLP.
- ISBE is still finalizing the procurement process.
- Once we have a contract(s) in place, ISBE will provide additional information to SFAs regarding how to order the frozen raw local ground beef.

Updated Purchasing Thresholds

Effective Oct. 1, 2025, [Federal purchasing thresholds](#) have been updated to reflect inflation, as required by statute. These thresholds determine which procurement rules apply to federal agencies and non-federal entities (states, local governments, tribes, nonprofits) when spending federal funds. The changes increase flexibility, reduce administrative burden, and expand the use of simplified purchasing methods.

Thresholds administered under federal awards are referenced in [48 CFR 2.101](#) (also known as FAR 2.101) and increased to the following starting Oct. 1, 2025:

- [Micro-purchase threshold](#) – increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000 and;
- [Simplified acquisition threshold](#) (also known as the small or informal purchase threshold) – increased from \$250,000 to \$350,000 and;
- [Large/Formal purchasing thresh-](#)

RESOURCES

- [ISBE Financial Management Webpage](#)
- [Procurement Fact Sheets:](#)
 - ◊ [Code of Conduct](#)
 - ◊ [Large/Formal Purchase Method: For FSMC/Vended Meals](#)

- ◊ [Large/Formal Purchase Method: For Food/Supplies/Equipment/ Services](#)
- ◊ [Micro Purchase Method](#)
- ◊ [Procurement Procedure](#)
- ◊ [Purchasing Equipment](#)
- ◊ [Small Purchase Method](#)
- ◊ [Terminologies](#)

[old](#) – greater than \$350,000 (Excludes soliciting for an FSMC contract which MUST be formally procured, at any value, following the [ISBE three-step procurement process](#)).

State and local agencies continue to possess the authority to set lower micro-purchase and simplified acquisition thresholds, thereby imposing more restrictive procurement requirements. For Example –Illinois Public schools **must** formally procure non-perishable foods, equipment and services when the aggregate annual value is greater than \$35,000 ([Public Act 102-1101/105 ILCS 5/10-20.21](#)).

State agencies and program operators are reminded to continue referencing Federal procurement regulations at [2 CFR 200](#), which cite the above regulations. This update applies to all Child Nutrition Programs, including the [National School Lunch Program](#) (NSLP), [School Breakfast Program](#) (SBP), [Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CACFP), and the [Summer Food Service Program](#) (SFSP).

What School Food Authorities should do now?

- Update procurement policies and manuals.
- Train procurement and program staff on new thresholds.

FSMC/Vended Meal Contract Renewal

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 recently 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 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](#).

Additional DOD Funds Available

The state has additional School Year 2025-26 DOD funds available now for school districts participating in the Food Distribution Program. You may request funds, by following the procedures below:

1. Please spend your allotted DOD funds before requesting additional funds.
2. Email Paula Williams at pawillia@isbe.net to request additional funds.
3. Additional funds will be added in increments of 20% of your SY 26 Beginning PAL Balance. For example, if your Beginning PAL Balance was \$20,000, we will add \$4,000.
4. If you use all additional funds, you can request more at that time, following this same process.
5. Questions may be directed to

Paula Williams
at pawillia@isbe.net.

ANNUAL ORDER PERIOD: The Food Distribution Program **School Year 2026-27 Annual Order Period** opened Jan. 12 and closes March 6.

The three spending options include [USDA Foods](#), [DOD Fresh](#), and [Diversion to Processors](#).

The Diversion to Processors option will close in the Illinois Commodity System (ICS) from Feb. 23-27 so that ISBE can compile truck loads. It will re-open March 2-6 for final changes. (You can [view the ICS Instructions online](#).)

All Diversion to Processor requests are due by March 6.

In case you missed it, a recording of our recent Food Distribution Program Training is available under "School Food Authority Resources" section on

the [Food Distribution Program webpage](#).

Please email fdp@isbe.net or call (217) 782-2491 with questions.



COMING UP! The St. Louis School Food & Nutrition Directors Association is partnering with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and ISBE to present the **2026 SFNDA/ISBE/MO-DESE Commodity Expo and Vendor Showcase** on Feb. 16-17.

The first day is a free networking reception from 5-8 p.m. The second day is also free admission and includes morning training sessions and then the vendor showcase. ISBE Nutrition Department staff will present a session on "Illinois Food Distribution for Schools."

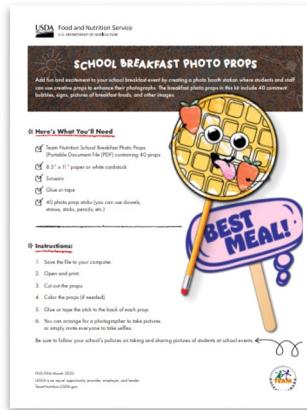
[Please be sure to register if you plan to attend; click here to get started.](#)

'The Quest for School Breakfast'

National School Breakfast Week (NSBW) is set for March 2-6, and this year's theme is "The Quest for School Breakfast." Here are some resources to help you get started and plan something special to celebrate nutritious meals and the incredible school nutrition professionals that make them happen.

Check out the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Team Nutrition for great [School Breakfast Program materials](#) to celebrate the special week.

The Team Nutrition [School Breakfast Photo Props](#) can add fun and excitement to your school breakfast event by creating a photo booth station where students and staff



can use creative props to enhance their photographs. The breakfast photo props in this kit include 40 comment bubbles, signs, pictures of breakfast foods, and other images. Print copies are available in color. Child nutrition program operators may request printed copies of this resource, while supplies last.

Visit the [School Nutrition Association's National School Breakfast Week website](#) for the official logo and a wide variety of resources.

DID YOU KNOW? The School Breakfast Program started in 1966 as a pilot project, and was made a permanent entitlement program by Congress in 1975.



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Announcements, Events, & Deadlines

- **Feb. 1** – [Deadline for On-Site Reviews](#)
- **Feb. 2** – ["Foundational Leadership for SN Professionals" training](#)
- **Feb. 3** – [ILSNA Winter Conference](#)
- **Feb. 4** – [ISBE School Nutrition Programs Update](#)
- **Feb. 10** – [Food Allergies in School Nutrition](#) webinar
- **Feb. 12** – Lincoln's Birthday (ISBE offices closed)
- **Feb. 15** – [School Breakfast Program Mandate opt-out deadline](#)
- **Feb. 16** – Presidents Day (ISBE offices closed)
- **Feb. 16-17** – [2026 SFNDA/ISBE/MO-DESE Commodity Expo and Vendor Showcase](#)
- **March** – Berries and Cherries Month (Try [Berry Cornmeal Muffins!](#))
- **March 4** – [ISBE School Nutrition Programs Update](#)
- **March 26** – [SY 26-27 CEP for Illinois Schools](#) webinar

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

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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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