



THE OUTLOOK

A Monthly Newsletter for School Nutrition Programs

MEAL PATTERNS & MENU PLANNING

Register for ISBE's Jan. 21 Webinar

Join the Illinois State Board of Education Nutrition Department staff for a **"SNP Meal Pattern Overview & Updates"** webinar from 2-3 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 21. [Registration is underway online; click here to sign up.](#)

Attendees will learn about the upcoming changes to the school nutrition standards from the [Final Rule](#) –

[Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.](#)

This training will cover National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Special Milk Program meal pattern and nutrition standards for the next several school years.

'The Road to Successful Menu Planning for School Meals'

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a new addition to ["The Road to Successful Menu Planning for School Meals"](#) Team Nutrition training series to help schools plan and implement menus that support updates to the school nutrition standards. The new 15-minute training covers ["Identifying Top Sources of Added Sugars and Simple Swaps."](#)

This training series includes quarterly one-hour live (and recorded) webinars co-hosted with the Institute of Child Nutrition, and short on-demand trainings. Both are designed to provide school nutrition professionals with quick tips, tools, and knowledge needed to meet

the nutrition standards for added sugars and sodium and to help create a road map for successful school menu planning now through School Year 2027-28.

Watch this recorded one-hour webinar with the Institute of Child Nutrition: [Creating Your Road Map to School Menu Planning Success!](#) And check out all of the short (about 15 minutes each), on-demand trainings.

These trainings and more are also available at the [Institute of Child Nutrition's iLearn portal](#) and [USDA's Professional Standards Training Database](#). Check out the USDA [Team Nutrition's website](#) for more menu planning, nutrition education, and promotion materials.

NEWS BITES

TRANSLATED APPLICATIONS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture added 10 additional languages to its [“Translated Model School Meals Application” webpage](#).



The application documents are provided as a template to assist local agencies in serving households where English is not spoken as a primary language. Households may also download these resources directly to be filled out and submitted to their local school district.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK

Want to see your school featured as the [Illinois State Board of Education’s Photo of the Week](#)?



1. Capture the moment. (Make sure your camera is horizontal.)
2. Ensure all students featured have a signed photo consent form on file.
3. Email the photo in jpg form to photos@isbe.net. Don’t forget to include a description of the photo.

DIETARY GUIDELINES

The Scientific Report of the 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee is available on [DietaryGuidelines.gov](#). The report contains the 2025 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee’s independent, evidence-based findings and advice to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the USDA. The Scientific Report, alongside public comments and federal agency input, will inform the two departments as they develop the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030, which is expected to be published in late 2025.

Next ISBE SNP Update Feb. 5

Join Illinois State Board of Education Nutrition Department staff for updates on the School Nutrition Programs. The next ISBE SNP Update webinar is scheduled for 2-3 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 5.

[Registration is underway on the ISBE website](#). You can sign up for the February webinar as well as ISBE SNP Updates in the first weeks of March, April, and May at the same link above.

We’ll cover important reminders and hot topics. Attendees can submit questions during the presentation to be answered by staff as we present.

Recordings of the fall 2024 ISBE SNP Updates are available on the ISBE

Nutrition Department’s [SNP Training and Professional Standards webpage](#).

In case you missed it, the November ISBE SNP Update included a refresher on preparing for an Administrative Review. The list of [School Food Authorities Selected for School Year 2024-25 Administrative Review](#) is available on the [Monitoring and Review Information webpage](#). Here you can also find a [“Preparing for an Administrative Review” resource guide](#) and other resources, including a Q&A document, Administrative Review checklists, and recorded trainings. You can also review Section L of the [School Nutrition Programs Administrative Handbook](#) for guidance on reviews.

HEALTHY MEALS INCENTIVES

Shine a Spotlight on Your School District

The [Healthy Meals Incentives \(HMI\) Recognition Awards](#) recognize and celebrate school nutrition programs across the country that are making a difference in the lives of their students.

From creative menu solutions to innovative nutrition education and more, share the success story of your school nutrition team by applying for a Recognition Award! Explore the [map of awardees](#), which includes



five districts from Illinois.

To learn more about the awards, visit healthymealsincentives.org.

Apply for an award by June 30 to be eligible to attend the [Fall 2025 Healthy Meals Summit](#) in Las Vegas.

SFAs are eligible to apply if they participate in the National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program.

Annual Order Period Set to Open Jan. 13

The School Year 2025-26 Annual Order Period opens Monday, Jan. 13, and closes Friday, March 7, 2025. 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) the week of Feb. 24-28, so that ISBE can compile truck loads. It will re-open March 3-7 for final changes. All diversion to processor requests are due by March 7.

Please refer to the [ICS Instructions](#) for step-by-step instructions on placing an order.

For those interested in the diversion to processor spending option, please check out the [Diversion to Processor Fact Sheet](#) and the [USDA Foods Show webpage](#) for resources and information related to processing. Email fdp@isbe.net with questions.

Additional DOD Funds Available for SY 24-25

The state has additional DOD funds available 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 25 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.

Questions can be directed to Paula Williams at pawillia@isbe.net.

Meals During E-Learning/Remote Days

It is a good time to remind districts about the rules and recommendations providing meals during e-learning days as we experience colder temperatures and winter weather.

Providing meals during e-learning days is not required. However, providing meals can be an important part of a student's day, regardless of whether instruction is in person or via electronic means. As such, districts are encouraged to offer meals to all enrolled students during e-learning days to the extent practical and possible and according to the individual needs of each student.

If a district or school switches to e-learning/remote learning for any unanticipated school closure (COVID-19, fire, flooding, weather related {heat, cold, snow}, strikes, etc.), the district may offer meals to all enrolled students. To receive federal reimbursement, the school district must submit a waiver request through the Web-Based Illinois Nutrition System (WINS) and may offer non-congregate meals to all enrolled students under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. Meals offered must continue to meet the federal program requirements. Districts must continue to charge, track,

and claim meals provided by individual student eligibility. CEP approved sites must track and claim meals daily.

For the waiver process, log into IWAS and then WINS. On the left side of your dashboard, click "Waivers" under the "Sponsor Tasks" tab. Start by clicking the blue "Apply New Waiver" button and select the Waiver Type. These waivers should be completed prior to the day(s) necessary if possible. [Instructions are available](#) on the [Waivers and Public Notices webpage](#).

If you have further questions, please contact ISBE's Nutrition Department at cnp@isbe.net.



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Announcements, Events, & Deadlines

- **Jan. 9** – [“Resources Gallery Walk: Tools and Training to Enhance Child Nutrition Culinary Programs” CICN webinar](#)
- **Jan. 10** – [2025 Farm to School Grant application deadline](#)
- **Jan. 13** – [SY 25-26 FDP Annual Order Period opens](#)
- **Jan. 15** – [Summer Food Service Mandate opt-out deadline](#)
- **Jan. 21** – [ISBE “SNP Meal Pattern Overview & Updates” webinar](#)
- **Jan. 20** – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (ISBE offices closed)
- **Jan. 23** – [NSLP Equipment Assistance Grants deadline](#)
- **Jan. 29** – [Illinois Farm to School Network Next Gen Bootcamp](#)
- **Jan. 30** – [“Serve It Safely Food Handler Training”](#)
- **Feb. 5** – [“ISBE SNP Update” webinar](#)
- **Feb. 11** – [“Food Allergies in School Nutrition”](#)
- **Feb. 11** – [ILSNA 2025 Winter Conference](#)
- **Feb. 12** – Lincoln’s Birthday (ISBE offices closed)
- **Feb. 15** – [School Breakfast Program Mandate opt-out deadline](#)



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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