



**THE**  **ILLINOIS**  
**STATE BOARD OF**  
**EDUCATION**

# OUTLOOK

A Monthly Newsletter for School Nutrition Programs

# TRAINING

# FOR SUCCESS

## ABCs of School Nutrition

Illinois State Board of Education Nutrition Department staff is partnering with the **University of Illinois Extension** to present free Summer Learning Institutes across the state in July and August. Find a location near you on the [ABCs of School Nutrition events webpage](#).

These free in-person trainings will cover such topics as staff recruitment and training, taste tests, vegetarian options in the lunchroom, ISBE Updates, and more. Topics and training hours will vary by date and location so be sure to check the individual events for details.

[“Serve It Safely Food Handler Training”](#) webinars are scheduled for Sept. 11 and Nov. 4. [“Food Allergies in School Nutrition”](#) will be presented Oct. 7. Register today!

## ICN Trainings

The **Institute of Child Nutrition** is offering two free Virtual Instructor-Led Trainings in July.

- **July 1** – [“Utilizing the Cafeteria as a Classroom: Marketing Healthy Options”](#)
- **July 17** – [“Utilizing the Cafeteria as a Classroom: Communicating With Parents”](#)

## ISBE Trainings

ISBE Nutrition Department staff will host free, half-day trainings on **Direct Certification and Household Eligibility Applications** in Normal (Aug. 13) and Naperville (Aug. 14). [Register online by clicking here](#).

**ADDITIONAL TRAININGS:** Watch for new training opportunities under the What’s New? section at [www.isbe.net/nutrition](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition). Registration is already under way for our School Year 2025-26 [ISBE SNP Update webinars](#).

**IN CASE YOU MISSED THEM:** Our [SNP Training and Professional Standards webpage](#) features a “ISBE On-Demand Trainings & Resources” section, where you can find recorded trainings on many topics. We will be updating and adding additional trainings for SY 25-26.

## NEWS BITES

### INSTITUTE OF CHILD NUTRITION

The Institute of Child Nutrition offers a five-day virtual workshop that walks school nutrition professionals through the complete USDA Recipe Standardization Process—from initial concept to implementation.



**“School Meal Recipe Workshop: From Concept to Standardization”** is available to [download for free on the ICN website](#).

### SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION

Are you a manager or frontline employee looking to expand your kitchen equipment knowledge or learn how to start scratch cooking in your operations? Join the **Illinois School Nutrition Association** in Glendale Heights on Aug. 6. Registration for **“Kitchen Confidence: Basic Culinary Training for SN Professionals”** is now available to non-members. There are limited spots available—sign up today! [Find out more details on the ILSNA website](#).



### FOOD SAFETY

#### WHAT'S NEW?

Be sure to bookmark our [What's New? section](#) to monitor the latest **Public Health Alerts and Food Recalls**. We also encourage sponsors to monitor the U.S. Department of Agriculture's [Recalls & Public Health Alerts webpage](#). The FDA also has a [Recalls, Market Withdrawals, & Safety Alerts webpage](#). Visit the ISBE Nutrition Department's [Child Nutrition Program Food Safety Information webpage](#) for other food safety resources.

## SY 25-26 Household Eligibility Documents

The [Household Eligibility Resources webpage](#) is updated with School Year 2025-26 documents. This includes the English and Spanish versions of the application, letter to households, and instructions.

Local Education Agencies participating in the National School Lunch Program and other federal School Nutrition Programs must distribute a Household Eligibility Application,

instructions, and appropriate letter to all households that have not been directly certified. The application, instructions and letters cannot be distributed any earlier than July 1. **Please note that schools/districts participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) do not collect Household Eligibility Applications from households to determine free or reduced eligibility.**

## PLE Tool for SY 25-26

The Paid Lunch Equity (PLE) Calculator for School Year 2025-26 is available online at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Nutrition-Resource-Management.aspx> under the PLE section, along with the [SY 25-26 Exemption Form](#).

PLE is a requirement under Section 205 of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 for all schools with pricing programs that participate in National School Lunch Program. The purpose of PLE is to increase paid meal prices to be more equal with funds brought in from free and reduced-price meal reimbursements. School Food Authorities with a negative balance will be required to complete the PLE tool and increase lunch prices as indicated on the tool. **The maximum the state agency can require the School Food Authority to increase is \$0.10.** However, each SFA may increase beyond the \$0.10 requirement.

**PLE EXEMPTION:** Any SFA with a positive or zero balance in its nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2024, is exempt from PLE pricing requirements found at 7 CFR 210.14(e) for SY 25-26. SFAs that had a negative balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2024, must follow PLE re-

quirements when establishing their prices for paid lunches in SY 25-26.

To be considered for the exemption for SY 25-26, SFAs will need to submit the [SY 25-26 Exemption Form](#), which includes instructions. Please scan the completed and signed form and email it to [pleexemption@isbe.net](mailto:pleexemption@isbe.net). Be sure to maintain a copy for your records. **The PLE exemption form is required to hold lunch prices at current level. Failure to submit a PLE exemption and not raising lunch prices will result in a citation.**

**ADULT MEAL PRICING:** Based on U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service Instruction 782-5 Rev. 1, adult meals must be priced to include Entitlement and Bonus. Entitlement and Bonus includes Planned Assistance Level of \$0.45 and menu certification of \$0.09 for total of \$0.54, with a round down of \$0.50. For 2025-26 school year, adult prices must be no less than \$0.50 above the Highest Paid Student rate in the school food authority.

**ATTENTION CEP SCHOOLS:** SFAs that are under Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or otherwise do not set lunch prices for students and are not required to complete the PLE tool or exemption.

# Updated Nutrition Standards

This is a reminder about updates to the [school nutrition standards](#) that will help schools encourage healthy choices that lead to healthy outcomes through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP), which serve around 30 million and 15 million children every school day, respectively. While some changes to the meal pattern requirements are phased in through School Year 2027-28, several changes are effective July 1, 2025. Please refer to the [timeline](#) for more information on updated nutrition requirements in school meals.

The following NSLP and SBP meal pattern changes must be implemented by **July 1, 2025**:

- **Added Sugars** – Schools must meet the following product-based added sugar limits:
  - **Breakfast cereals** must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce ([7 CFR 210.10\(c\)\(2\)\(iii\)\(B\)](#)).
  - **Yogurt** must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams per ounce) ([7 CFR 210.10\(c\)\(2\)\(iv\)\(C\)](#)).
  - **Flavored milk** must contain no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces, or 15 grams of added sugars per 12 fluid ounces for flavored milk sold as a competitive beverage for middle and high schools ([7 CFR 210.10\(d\)\(1\)\(iii\)](#)).
- **NSLP Afterschool Snacks** – Schools serving NSLP afterschool snacks to children in grades K-12 must serve the meal components and quantities found at [7 CFR 210.10\(o\)\(2\)](#). Two highlights include:
  - No more than half of the weekly fruit or vegetable offerings at NSLP snacks may be in the form of juice.
  - At least 80 percent of the grains offered during the week for NSLP snacks must be whole grain-rich.
  - Grain-based desserts, except for sweet crackers such as animal and graham crackers, do not contribute toward the grains requirement.
- **Meal Modifications** – Schools must accept medical statements from registered dietitians requesting meal modifications on behalf of students with disabilities in

the school meal programs. Refer to [7 CFR 210.10\(m\)\(1\)\(i\)](#) for more information.

- **Substitution of Vegetables for Fruits at Breakfast**
  - Schools that choose to substitute vegetables for fruit at breakfast one day per school week may offer any vegetable, including a starchy vegetable.
  - Schools that choose to substitute vegetables for fruit at breakfast on two or more days per week are required to offer vegetables from at least two different vegetable subgroups. Refer to [SP 02-2025](#) and [SP 13-2025](#) for details.
- **Sodium** – The current sodium limits at breakfast and lunch will remain in place until July 1, 2027. Schools are encouraged to gradually work toward meeting the future sodium requirements ([7 CFR 210.10\(c\)](#)). Visit the following website for more information: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards/sodium-limits>.
- **Buy American** – Schools' non-domestic food purchases must not exceed 10 percent of total annual commercial food costs as outlined in [7 CFR 210.21\(d\)\(5\)\(ii\)\(A\)](#) and [7 CFR 220.16\(d\)\(5\)\(ii\)\(A\)](#). As outlined in recent guidance, State agencies have the ability to approve a temporary accommodation to those school food authorities that demonstrate they cannot meet the threshold requirement for non-domestic purchases (see [SP09-2025](#)).

To assist schools in meeting the updated nutrition standards, the following resources are available from Team Nutrition and the Institute of Child Nutrition:

- [Crediting Tip Sheets in Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Offering Meats and Meat Alternates at School Breakfast](#)
- [Reducing Added Sugars at School Breakfast](#)
- [Serving School Meals to Preschoolers](#)
- [The Whole Grain Resource for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#)
- [Nutrition Standards for Added Sugars Fact Sheets](#)

Thank you for your vital role in ensuring students across the country get the nutrition they need to grow and thrive.



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## Announcements, Events, & Deadlines

- **July 1** – [“Utilizing the Cafeteria as a Classroom: Marketing Healthy Options,”](#) ICN Virtual Instructor-Led Training
- **July 4** – Independence Day (ISBE offices closed)
- **July 17** – [“Utilizing the Cafeteria as a Classroom: Communicating With Parents,”](#) ICN Virtual Instructor-Led Training
- **July 24** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Lawrenceville
- **July 29** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Chicago
- **July 29** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Jacksonville
- **July 30** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Decatur
- **July 30** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Edwardsville
- **July 30** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Mattoon
- **Aug. 5** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Rockford
- **Aug. 6** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Champaign
- **Aug. 6** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Oglesby
- **Aug. 6** – [Summer Learning Institute](#), Centralia

*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).*

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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)

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