

Implementation Timeline for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) final rule, *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs*, published on January 26, 2012, changed the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) meal patterns for grades K-12. Implementation of most of the NSLP meal pattern requirements began in school year 2012-13. The SBP meal requirements (other than milk) were implemented gradually, beginning in school year 2013-14.

The USDA’s final rule, *Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements*, published on December 12, 2018, changes some of the meal pattern requirements in the final rule, *Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program*. Effective July 1, 2019, this final rule:

- permanently allows flavored low-fat milk;
- eliminates the requirement that all grains must be WGR (which took effect for school year 2014-15);
- requires that at least half of the weekly grains must be WGR and all other grains must be enriched; and
- provides more time for gradual sodium reduction in school meals. The final rule retains sodium target 1 through the end of school year (SY) 2023-24, requires compliance with sodium target 2 in SY 2024-25 (which begins July 1, 2024), and eliminates the final target that would have taken effect in SY 2022-23.

For more information on the WGR and sodium requirements, see the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) handouts, *Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP* and *Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP*.

Implementation (school year) for NSLP (L) and SBP (B)				
Meal Pattern Requirements	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2024-25
Fruits component				
• Offer fruit daily	L			
• Fruit quantity increase to 5 cups per week (minimum of 1 cup per day)			B	
Vegetables component				
• Offer vegetables subgroups weekly	L			

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Implementation (school year) for NSLP (L) and SBP (B)				
Meal Pattern Requirements	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2024-25
Grains component				
• Half of grains must be whole grain-rich	L	B		
• All grains must be whole-grain rich			L, B	
• Offer weekly grains range	L	B		
Meats/meat alternates component				
• Offer weekly meats/meat alternates ranges (daily minimum)	L			
Milk component				
• Offer only fat-free (unflavored or flavored) and low-fat (unflavored) milk	L, B			
Dietary specifications (to be met on average over a week)				
• Calorie ranges	L	B		
• Saturated fat limit (no change)	L, B			
• Sodium target 1			L, B	
• Sodium target 2				L, B
• Zero grams of trans fat per portion	L	B		
Menu planning				
• A single food-based menu planning approach	L	B		
Age/grade group				
• Establish age/grade groups: K-5, 6-8, 9-12	L	B		
Offer versus serve (OVS)				
• Reimbursable meals must contain a fruit or vegetable (½ cup minimum)	L		B	
Monitoring				
• 3-year administrative review cycle		L, B		
• Conduct weighted nutrient analysis on 1 week of menus	L	B		

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Resources

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Nutrition Standards for School Meals (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>

Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/SodiumTimeline.pdf>

USDA final rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements (83 FR 63775):

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2018-12-12/pdf/2018-26762.pdf>

USDA final rule: Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-01-26/pdf/2012-1010.pdf>

USDA memo SP 18-2018 CACFP 13-2018: Child Nutrition Programs' Flexibilities for School Year 2018-2019:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/child-nutrition-programs%E2%80%99-flexibilities-school-year-2018-2019>

Whole Grain-rich Criteria for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/WGRCriteria.pdf>

This guidance applies only to the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12. For guidance on the preschool meal patterns, see the CSDE's guide, *Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Afterschool Snack Program*, and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For more information, see the CSDE's [handout, Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).

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For more information, review the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) guide, [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#), and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpages, or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/ImplementationTimeline.pdf>.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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