

Back to School Checklist



This checklist outlines key activities and tools to help sponsors prepare for a successful school year.

Renewal Applications

- Submit your applications for the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program and Afterschool Snack Program in the [Child Nutrition Portal](#) no later than September 16, 2024. Find detailed application instructions on the [How to Apply webpage](#).
 - Afterschool Snack Program applications may be submitted anytime during the school year.

School Meal Eligibility and Household Income Forms

- Complete the first [Direct Certification](#) match in the Child Nutrition Portal prior to the first day of school.
- [Distribute, collect, and process household income applications](#) to determine student eligibility:
 - Sponsors not participating in HSMA: Use the standard free and reduced-price application.
 - HSMA Sponsors with no or some CEP sites: Use the combination form to streamline information collection between all sites.
 - HSMA Sponsors with all CEP sites: Use the combination form or [FEDS form](#) for household income collection. (optional)

Meal Counting & Claiming

- Ensure the Point Of Sale system is set up to claim meals by student eligibility (not required for sites operating CEP).
 - If participating in Healthy School Meals for All: ensure the POS is set up so no students will be charged for a meal. Sites not operating CEP must still count students by eligibility status.
- Establish internal controls with claim [edit check](#) processes to ensure daily meal counts do not exceed the number of students eligible or in attendance.
- Follow unpaid meal charges protocols utilizing the [Unpaid Meal Charges Flyer](#) and [Debt and Donation Guidance](#) resources.
- Review the [meal claiming instructions](#) to ensure you will be prepared to enter claims prior to the deadline.

[Subscribe to the Dish Newsletter for the latest program updates, reminders and resources](#)

[Visit the Events and Program Deadlines webpage for additional due dates](#)

[Identify your point of contact for the upcoming school year. This person will answer program questions and assist with applications, reviews, and technical assistance needs.](#)



Civil Rights

- Utilize the [Civil Rights Requirements Self-Check](#) to review and document compliance.

Professional Standards

- [Track all completed trainings](#) on a training tracker with key area and learning objective codes.
- New: Annual procurement training is required for staff who work with NSLP procurement. CDE offers two options, [an On the Menu webinar](#) and a [Moodle course](#).
- All School Nutrition professionals must complete required training hours over the course of the school year.

Food Safety

- Contact your local public health agency to [request two food safety inspections](#) for the school year. Best practice is to submit the request prior to the new SY start date, or within the first 2 weeks of program operations.
- New: Ensure at least 1 person at each kitchen site with on-site meal preparation has completed the [Certified Food Protection Manager](#) certification by March 1st, 2025.

Resource Management

- Complete the Paid Lunch Equity Tool to ensure the paid meals price meets federal requirements.
- Waived for sponsors participating in Healthy School Meals for All and/or CEP
- Complete the Non-program Revenue Tool to ensure pricing for non-program foods meets federal requirements.

[Training Resources](#)

- On The Menu Calls are held the fourth Thursday of each month from 2-3 p.m. unless otherwise noted. Topics reflect current happenings and required annual training and provide opportunities for networking with peers.
- Review self-paced online trainings in CDE's Moodle platform.

Healthy School Meals for All (HSMA)

- New: Sponsors are required to implement CDE's operating recommendations to remain eligible for this program. Operating recommendations are provided to districts on a 1:1 basis.
- New: Sponsors with non-CEP sites are required to implement activities listed in the Application Policy to increase free/reduced application collection.
- Sponsors participating in HSMA can use the [outreach toolkit](#) to share more information with your school community. This toolkit includes talking points on the importance of families providing household income information.
- Sponsors will opt in or out of the program via the renewal application. Applications must be submitted by September 16.
- For more information on HSMA, visit the [webpage](#) and [frequently asked questions document](#).

Serving Preschool Students

- [Confirm program eligibility](#) for any preschool students you plan to serve.

[Check the AR and TA cycle to see if you will receive a review or a TA visit this year](#)

