

Monthly Update

School Nutrition Programs

October 1, 2026

Distributed to the School Nutrition Program Authorized Representatives Listserv and the Food Service Directors Listserv and posted at <https://cnw.ksde.gov>, SNP, SNP Monthly Updates



Important Updates, Reminders, & Deadlines

Happy National School Lunch Week! October 12-16

National School Lunch Week (NSLW) was created to promote the importance of a healthy school lunch in a child's life and the impact it has inside and outside of the classroom. Schools are encouraged to celebrate with special menus, events, and activities. Promotional materials, activity ideas, and marketing resources that promote this year's "Cafeteria Circus" theme are available on [SNA's National School Lunch Week website](#). Please let your child nutrition consultant know how you will be celebrating, and don't forget to post on Facebook using the hashtag **#FuelingKSKids** or email photos to any member of our team.

October Town Hall – October 22

The October Town Hall will cover important reminders and updates for both SNP and CACFP. Farm to Plate Month will be celebrated with program updates, sponsor best practice sharing, and a "crunch off" event! Plan now to join the KSDE Child Nutrition & Wellness team on October 22 at 2 p.m. at this link: [Join the meeting now](#) (Meeting ID: 241 814 717 448 Passcode: hW7Wy3Ax). The link is also available on the [CNW Calendar](#).

REQUIRED: Verification Tasks & Deadlines

Verification is confirmation of eligibility for reduced price and free meals under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. The following sponsors do *not* complete verification:

- Sponsors participating in ONLY the Special Milk Program
- Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCI) that do not also operate a day school
- Sponsors that are participating district-wide in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

All other sponsors must select and verify eligibility for a sample of applications approved for benefits. One person should coordinate all verification activities for the sponsor. Important deadlines for the verification process are:

- October 1 – Enter the number of applications approved for reduced price and free meals in each category on the Pre-Verification Worksheet in KN-CLAIM. Applications that are in "carry-over" status on October 1 are NOT included in this count. Once the Pre-Verification Worksheet is submitted, go into the Post-Verification Results screen to see the number and type of applications that must be verified. Verify ONLY the number required unless additional applications are verified "for cause."
- October 31 – Enter the number of students approved for reduced price and free meals in each category on the Pre-Verification Worksheet in KN-CLAIM. Do NOT update the number of applications.
 - CEP sponsors only: Enter the number of students directly certified for Food Assistance (FA) as of 10/31/2026 for CEP sites and non-CEP sites. This total should be the same as row 1a. If the sponsor is 100% CEP, put a zero for non-CEP sites.



- November 15 – Complete all verification activities. This deadline is the same whether it falls on a weekday or weekend.
- December 15 – Complete reporting of Post-Verification Results in KN-CLAIM.

To navigate to the Verification screens in KN-CLAIM, select School Nutrition Programs, Program Year 2027, then click on the “Forms” tab on the Sponsor Summary page. On the same line as “Pre-Verification Worksheet,” click the <Add> button, which can be found on the right-hand side of the screen and has the image of a + sign. For step-by-step instructions, the Verification Quick Reference Guide is available in KN-CLAIM under PY 2027, Quick References, Verification. Verification guidance and related forms are available on the [CNW website](#) under SNP, Food Service Facts, Chapter 8: Verification of Eligibility.

USDA requires KSDE to submit annual verification data for each sponsor. This report is compiled using the information you provide on the Pre-Verification Worksheet and the Post-Verification Results screens in KN-CLAIM. Please ensure that the data entered is accurate, complete, and submitted by the deadline.

Verification Office Hours – October 1 & 30

KSDE Child Nutrition & Wellness will be hosting office hours to assist program operators with the completion of verification. Any program operator with specific questions pertaining to the verification processes is encouraged to join the CNW team during the designated office hours, which will be held on October 1 from 2 to 3 p.m. and October 30 from 9 to 10 a.m. The meeting links are available on the [CNW Calendar](#).

Online Verification Trainings Available

Training covering the steps required to complete verification within all established deadlines was held in early September. The recording is now available on the KSDE Training Portal at <https://learning.ksde.org> under K12 Staff, Child Nutrition & Wellness: SNP.

Pre-Verification Worksheet (20 min) and Post-Verification Worksheet (10 min) tutorials are also available on the [KSDE Training Portal](#) under K12 Staff, Child Nutrition & Wellness: Tutorials, SNP Tutorials.

SNP & FFVP Reimbursement Claim Reminders

Original and upward claim revisions are due within 60 days of the end of the claiming month. 60-day deadlines for PY 2027 are outlined in the resource titled “Claim Deadlines – Program Year 2027,” which is available in [SNP Food Service Facts, Chapter 11](#).

Please note that voucher dates are not dependent on or altered by claim due dates. Vouchers, including for School Nutrition Programs and the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program, are typically posted on the first and third Tuesdays of each month between 8 and 9:30 a.m. This allows direct deposit payments to be made on Fridays, as posting of vouchers is a four-business-day process before payment is received via ACH direct deposit (if ACH is not set up, physical checks are mailed on Thursdays of the vouchering week). Site and Sponsor Claims in “Approved” status by 8 a.m. on each applicable Tuesday will be batched and paid that corresponding Friday. Multiple claims can be paid in one batch. For questions regarding claims or meal reimbursement payments, please contact Dessa Gifford, Public Service Administrator for School Finance, at (785) 296-4965 or desa.gifford@ksde.gov.



Excess Cash Balance in Food Service Fund

To maintain the nonprofit status of the Food Service Fund, the fund balance or net cash resources of the fund should not exceed three (3) months' average expenditures. If the Food Service Fund balance exceeds three months' average expenditures by more than 10%, the Annual Financial Report will include a section titled "Plans and Actions to Reduce Excess Cash Balances." The sponsor will enter their planned expenditures to reduce the excess balance. KSDE will then review and approve the plans. Only allowable expenses will be considered approvable. Before purchasing, sponsors must obtain approval for any capital equipment expenses not on the "CNP Equipment List." Complete the "Equipment Purchase Request Form" to request approval of capital equipment not on the pre-approved list. The "CNP Equipment List" and "Equipment Purchase Request Form" are available in [Chapter 13 of SNP Food Service Facts](#).

8th Annual Mountain Plains Crunch Off – October 2026

Each October, the USDA Mountain Plains Region holds a Crunch Off in celebration of National Farm to School Month. The Crunch Off is a friendly competition between the Mountain Plains Region States (KS, MO, NE, CO, WY, MT, ND, SD) to see who can get the most "crunches" into local fruits and vegetables throughout the month of October. Participate in the Crunch Off and register your crunch here: [2026 Crunch Off](#)

Coming Soon: FY2026 Equipment Assistance Grant

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) has been awarded the USDA FY2026 Child Nutrition Equipment Assistance Grant. National School Lunch Program (NSLP) sponsors may apply to obtain new equipment or to renovate or replace existing equipment. KSDE has \$183,851.00 available for competitive grants. Sponsors will complete an application and submit to KSDE to be considered for an Equipment Assistance Grant. Applications are expected to be available October 2026. Applications are expected to be posted to the [CNW website](#) under SNP, [What's New](#) on October 5.

USDA Updates

Final Rule: Simplified Geographic Preference Procurement in Child Nutrition Programs

On September 9, 2026, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA) published the direct final rule with comment period, [Simplified Geographic Preference Procurement in Child Nutrition Programs](#) (91 FR 57245) effective November 9, 2026.

The rule does not change policy or implementation — it simply clarifies existing requirements to make the geographic preference option easier to understand and use across the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program for Children, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program, collectively known as USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. This rule also supports [USDA's Harvest to Hallways Initiative](#) to improve school meals and strengthen the connection between American agriculture and America's children.

FNA will follow up soon with a memorandum that provides information about the direct final rule to Child Nutrition Program Regional Offices and State Agency Directors.



Promoting Real Food in Child Nutrition Programs

USDA's Team Nutrition is pleased to announce the release of nutrition education and training resources designed to help Child Nutrition Program operators to promote the clear, common-sense message of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030*: Eat real food. These resources focus on eating whole, nutrient-dense foods. These foods include protein foods, dairy, healthy fats, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Additionally, it highlights the importance of limiting the intake of highly processed foods, added sugars, and refined carbohydrates.

- Are you real food-savvy? Test your knowledge with the [Eat Real Food Web Quiz!](#)
- [Real Food Guide to School Lunch for Families](#)
- [Real Food Guide to School Breakfast for Families](#)
- [Stronger With School Meals Activity Booklet](#)

Professional Development & Training

Training Opportunities

Many opportunities for learning are available to SNP sponsors. Go to the [CNW Calendar](#) to access the schedule of live classes with dates, times, and links or registration information. Upcoming trainings include:

- **Office Hours: Verification Technical Assistance** on October 1 from 2-3 p.m.
- **Director's Forum** (*in-person*) on October 9 in Wichita
- **SNA-KS Annual Conference** (*in-person*) on October 9-11 in Wichita
- **What to Expect When You're Inspected** on October 14 from 2-3 p.m.
- **Food Safety Basics** on October 21 from 2-5 p.m.
- **Office Hours: Verification Technical Assistance** on October 30 from 9-10 a.m.
- **Food Service Fund Fundamentals** on November 4 from 2-3 p.m.

On-demand training is offered 24/7 on the [KSDE Training Portal](#). Detailed instructions on creating an account are available on the [CNW website](#) under Training, [How to Create Online Account](#). On-demand training is also available on the Institute of Child Nutrition's (ICN) [iLearn](#) platform.

If you would like to schedule an in-service, culinary coach session, or have questions about professional development, contact Holly Steinlage at holly.steinlage@ksde.gov.

Culinary Coaches Training Program

This training opportunity allows sponsors to request in-person, hands-on culinary training conducted at their site. **Sponsors can choose from five training topics: Critical Culinary Skills, Knife Basics, Cooking Basics, and Baking Basics: Quick Breads or Yeast Breads.** The sessions are led by trained culinary coaches and focus on developing culinary skills that will better enable child nutrition program sponsors to prepare scratch and speed scratch recipes. If interested in scheduling a culinary coach session, please contact Holly Steinlage at holly.steinlage@ksde.gov.

REQUIRED Training: SNP Annual Administrative Training

At least one representative from each sponsor must complete SNP Annual Administrative Training annually. The virtual training on June 2 was recorded and is now available on the [KSDE Training Portal](#) under K12 Staff, Child Nutrition & Wellness: SNP.

**Director's Forum (in-person) – October 9**

KSDE Child Nutrition & Wellness will be hosting an SNP Director's Forum on Friday, October 9 from 1 to 5 p.m. The forum is open to all SNP Directors and will be held in conjunction with the SNA-KS Annual Conference in Wichita. Make plans to attend the meeting to hear updates from KSDE and connect with other directors! For more information, contact Holly Steinlage at holly.steinlage@ksde.gov. Please register at the following link by October 2: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3N5CKJC>

School Nutrition Association of Kansas Annual Conference (in-person) – October 9-11

The School Nutrition Association of Kansas (SNA-KS) Conference and Industry Showcase (Food Show) will be held on October 9 to 11 in Wichita. The conference provides a great opportunity to connect with vendors and fellow school nutrition professionals during a weekend of professional development and social activities. For more information or to register, visit the [SNA-Kansas 2026 Conference](#) website.

What to Expect When You're Inspected – October 14

This training will highlight what food safety inspectors typically review, key documentation to have ready, and best practices for interacting with inspectors. It will be held on October 14 from 2 to 3 p.m. The training link is available on the [CNW Calendar](#).

Food Service Fund Fundamentals – November 4

This training will provide an introductory overview of how to manage a child nutrition program food service fund, covering topics such as revenue requirements, allowable costs, and financial recordkeeping. It will be held on November 4 from 2 to 3 p.m. The training link is available on the [CNW Calendar](#).

New Resources**SY 2026-27 Adopt a Cow Registration Open**

The Discover Dairy "Adopt a Cow" program is an exciting, year-long experience for classrooms. Throughout the program, you'll get an inside look at dairy farming and be paired with a calf from a working dairy farm in Kansas. You'll find out what her name is, when her birthday is, where she lives, and how the farmer takes care of her. You'll also receive progress updates, photos of the cow, live chats from the farm, activity sheets for students, suggested lessons that follow Common CORE standards, and even opportunities to write letters to your calf! All updates are easily accessible via an online portal and app for Apple and Android. Enroll in the free program for the 2026-27 school year anytime before January 31 at discoverdairy.com/adopt.

Earn a FREE Culinary Kit for Your School Kitchen!

Does your kitchen need a new digital scale or blender? Participate in the Local Foods Culinary Training on the KSDE Training Portal and earn a free culinary kit for your school kitchen! Each school kitchen with a staff member completing the training is eligible to receive a culinary toolkit consisting of a dough cutter, wire whisk, digital scale, and blender (1 kit per school kitchen), while supplies last. Instructions for completing the survey to receive the toolkit are posted at the end of the online training. This 2-hour training features Kansas products and producers, gives helpful information on how to implement Farm to Plate in Kansas Child Nutrition Programs, and provides recipes and culinary tips for incorporating the Kansas products featured in the training into local menus. The training is available on the [KSDE Training Portal](#) under K12 Staff, Child Nutrition & Wellness: General Classes, Local Foods Culinary Training (2 Hours).



If you have questions or need technical assistance, please contact your child nutrition consultant or call the Child Nutrition & Wellness office at (785) 296-2276.



For more information, contact:

Kelly Chanay
Director, Child Nutrition & Wellness
(785) 296-2276
<https://cnw.ksde.gov>
kelly.chanay@ksde.gov

Kansas State Department of Education
900 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 102
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1212
(785) 296-3201
www.ksde.gov

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