

CREC Food Service Program Information for Parents



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Meal Programs/Sponsorship:

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. CREC also offers breakfast and after-school snack programs in some schools. CREC is the sponsor for meal programs in most locations; however, some CREC sites are sponsored by other School Food Authorities. Coordination of meal programs among the different sponsors and towns is handled by the Food Service Program Coordinator. Please contact the Food Service Program Coordinator if you have questions about sponsorship.

Free and Reduced Priced Meals:

State approved family meal applications are prepared and distributed to parents at the beginning of each school year. Some students that qualify for free meals due to their participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps) are automatically eligible for free meals if their data is submitted to CREC from the Department of Social Services. Meal eligibility is determined for the entire school year and carries forward for 30 operating days into the next school year unless new meal application information is submitted. School secretaries' process the meal applications based on the Federal guidelines and are the determining officials in CREC sponsored programs. Online meal applications are also available for some CREC sponsored sites. See the below link for more information:

https://www.crecschools.org/for_parents/parent_resources/crec_food_service_program_information/meal_application_requirements

Verification of the meal application information submitted via a sample of households qualified for free or reduced meals must begin on Oct. 1 of each year, and parents must provide documentation/proof of their application information by November 15th if selected.

Payment for Meals:

Students not qualified for free meals must pay for their meals at either the reduced or full price based on their eligibility status. Meal prices are determined by the Magnet School Office and Operations Department. Online prepayments are available to parents in many CREC sponsored schools at the <http://www.myschoolbucks.com> website, or through the non-CREC sponsored town online payment portals. Look under the "For Parents and Students" section for your school at the www.crecschools.org website for more meal program and payment information. Parents/students may also pay at the school, but prepayments are highly preferred. Parents that do not provide payments for their child's meals should send meals from home with their child. Although credit for meals may be offered, it is not required by the State, and funding for unpaid meals cannot come out of any school lunch account funds. Click [HERE](#) for CREC's Meal Charging Policy.

Healthy Food Certification:

Section 10-215f of the Connecticut General Statutes requires that each board of education or governing authority for all public schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (including the Connecticut Technical High School System, charter schools, interdistrict magnet schools and endowed academies) must certify annually to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) whether the district will follow the Connecticut Nutrition Standards for all foods sold to students separately from reimbursable school meals. **All CREC Schools participate in this program.**

The Connecticut Nutrition Standards apply to all sources of food sales on school premises at all times including, but not limited to, school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias and any fundraising activities on school premises. **Only approved items may be sold in all CREC schools.** Districts that opt to implement healthy food certification (HFC) receive an additional 10 cents per lunch, based on the total number of reimbursable lunches (paid, free and reduced) served in the district in the prior school year.

State Competitive Foods Regulations:

Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies apply to all public schools that participate in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs. The sale or dispensing of candy to students is prohibited anywhere on school premises from 30 minutes before the start of any state or federally subsidized meal or milk program (National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, After-School Snack Program and Special Milk Program) until 30 minutes after the end of the program. Any food and beverage sales held anywhere on school premises during this time frame must comply with this regulation, including beverages that meet the requirements of state statute and food that meets the Connecticut Nutrition Standards. Regulations also prohibit coffee, tea and soft drinks during this time frame.

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Competitive-Foods>

State Beverage Requirements:

Only five categories of beverages can be sold to students in public schools at all times and from all sources including, but not limited to, cafeterias, vending machines, school stores and fundraisers. This statute applies to all public schools, regardless of whether they participate in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs or healthy food certification (see “Healthy Food Certification”). Beverages that do not meet the statutory requirements can be sold to students only if the board of education votes to allow exemptions and the beverages are sold at the location of events that occur after the school day or on the weekend, provided they are not sold from a vending machine or school store. Prohibited beverages include soda (regular and diet), coffee (regular, decaffeinated and iced), tea (regular, herbal and iced), hot chocolate, sports drinks, energy drinks, and any other beverages that do not meet the statutory requirements.

Student Nutrition and Physical Activity (Student Wellness Policy):

The Capitol Region Education Council policy #6142.10 (a) recognizes that student wellness and proper nutrition are related to physical well-being, growth, development and readiness to learn. CREC is committed to providing a learning environment that promotes student wellness, proper nutrition, nutrition education, and regular physical activity as part of the total educational experience. In a healthy school environment, students will be exposed to, and participate in, positive nutritional and lifestyle practices that can improve student achievement. Look under the “For Parents” link at the top of the crecschools.org webpage for more information concerning Health Services or the following Health and Wellness resource link under Food Service Program Information:

https://www.crecschools.org/for_parents/parent_resources/crec_food_service_program_information/health_and_wellness_resources

Civil Rights Requirements:

Federal legislation establishes regulations and requirements for recipients of federal funds to prohibit discrimination and ensure equal access to all programs and activities of the recipients. Based on these requirements the U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination in Child Nutrition Programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and sex.

Nondiscrimination Statement that must be posted in meal service areas (And Justice for All Posters):

“In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.”

“To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.” <https://www.ascr.usda.gov/filing-program-discrimination-complaint-usda-customer>

Three federal laws require school food service programs to make special dietary accommodations for children with disabilities: 1) the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; 2) the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and 3) the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The USDA’s federal nondiscrimination regulations (7CFR 15 b) and regulations governing the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program also require accommodations for children with disabilities, **when a recognized medical authority certifies the need.** The Connecticut State Department of Public Health defines a recognized medical authority as a physician, physician assistant, doctor of osteopathy or advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). APRNs include nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists and certified nurse anesthetists who are licensed as APRNs. Additionally, state legislation addresses the requirement for a lunch period and a management plan for life-threatening food allergies, as well as numerous laws regarding school health services.

USDA nondiscrimination regulations require substitutions or modifications for school meals for children who are considered disabled under 7 CFR Part 15b and whose disability restricts their diet. USDA regulations permit substitutions for other participants who are not disabled but are unable to consume regular school meals because of medical or other special dietary needs. **Substitutions can only be made by the food service program based on written documentation from a medical authority, not based on written or verbal communication from a parent/guardian.**

<http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

