

Howard's News From MDE

March 14, 2018



Here is the latest from MDE:

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)

The application for the 2018-19 FFVP Grant is now available.

- Eligibility: The FFVP grants pay for high-need elementary schools to serve free fresh fruit and vegetable snacks during the school day to students. A school qualifies to apply if it is an **elementary school** participating in the [National School Lunch Program](#)ⁱ with **50% or more of its students eligible for free and reduced price meals**. Schools that apply must be able to **begin the program within one week of the start of the regular school year**.
- How to Apply: Complete the online [MEGS+ Application](#)ⁱⁱ (must be a MEGS+ Level 5 or Child Nutrition Application Program Level 3 user to initiate application).
- Winners: Winning schools will be announced by late May.
- Questions? Please contact Adrienne Davenport at DavenportA1@michigan.gov or 517-241-1762.

USDA Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool

USDA has recently made enhancements to the Professional Standards Tracker Tool. This tool provides:

- Access to a database of trainings to auto-populate training information
- Ability for managers to enter trainings for multiple employees
- Reminder alerts for remaining annual training requirements
- Notifications for annual training requirement completion
- Ability to run reports, edit entries, and auto-populate school contact information

Visit the [USDA Professional Standards Training Tracker Tool](#)ⁱⁱⁱ to check out the enhancements and start tracking your hours today!

School Meals Overview Training (SMOT)

Registration is now open for the two August SMOTs. See the registration links below.

- Important Note: If registering for the Escanaba site, it is highly recommended you make your hotel reservation as soon as possible. This training falls in the middle of the week of the UP State Fair, which is held in Escanaba.

Escanaba - [Bay de Noc Community College - August 14-16, 2018](#)^{iv}

Mt. Pleasant - [Mid Michigan Community College - August 21-23, 2018](#)^v

Muskegon Area Farm to School Program

View the following [video](#) for information on the Muskegon Area Farm to School Program and Cultivate Michigan.

USDA Press Release

See the attached USDA Press Release regarding the Child Nutrition Hiring Flexibility Rule and the Child Nutrition Food Crediting Request for Information.

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ⁱ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/national-school-lunch-program-nslp>

ⁱⁱ https://mdoe.state.mi.us/MEGSPLUS/Login2.aspx?APP THEME=MIMDE_MEGSPLUS&ReturnURL=/megsplus

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://pstrainingtracker.fns.usda.gov/>

^{iv} <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/school-meals-overview-training-smot-escanaba-august-14-16-2018-registration-42461486449>

^v <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/school-meals-overview-training-smot-mtpleasant-august-21-23-2018-registration-42462809406>



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Press Release

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USDA Announces More Local Control for School Meal Operations

WASHINGTON, March 5, 2018 – U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Secretary Steve Censky today announced two new efforts to provide states and school districts with additional flexibility and support to operate more efficient school meal programs. Censky made the announcement during a speech at the School Nutrition Association Legislative Action Conference in Washington, D.C.

Child Nutrition Hiring Flexibility Rule

In 2015, USDA established education and training requirements for nutrition professionals as part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. While this strengthened many school meal programs, some small school districts faced challenges finding qualified applicants to direct their local food service operation. Today’s proposal would provide much-needed relief for school districts with less than 2,500 students, allowing them more flexibility in the hiring of new school nutrition program directors.

“Small and rural school districts will no longer have to overlook qualified food service professionals because of one-size-fits-all standards that don’t meet their needs,” said Censky. “We trust our local partners to hire talented school nutrition program directors who will manage the meal service in a way that protects the health and well-being of students.”

USDA is providing a 60-day [public comment](#) period and will then develop a final rule that responds to the needs of partners and stakeholders.

Child Nutrition Food Crediting Request for Information

To support states’ efforts to improve program integrity, USDA also rolled out a suite of [customizable resources](#) to help local school districts improve the accuracy of their school meal application processes. These resources include support for online applications, evidenced-based materials, and best practices to simplify the process for families and ensure that eligible children receive free and reduced-priced meals.

“USDA’s goal to do right and feed everyone starts with our children,” said Censky. “We are committed to giving states and school districts more tools and options to build a bright, self-sufficient future for America’s children through well-managed school meal programs.”

As part of this package, USDA is offering guidance to help schools utilize its award-winning, open-source [online school meal application model](#). USDA developed the application with input from local food service professionals. The customer-friendly design of the model is intended to increase the integrity of the application process by reducing common mistakes families make when applying for free or reduced-priced school meals.

“These tools are the benchmark for future innovation and give schools 21st century resources and strategies to run efficient food service operations, now and into the future,” Censky said. “Schools can ensure the proper use of funds for feeding students in need, protecting the taxpayer dollar through high integrity programs.”

USDA invites software developers in private industry to join schools in delivering customer service by helping them tailor their own applications.

Today’s announcement is the latest in a series of recent USDA actions to expand flexibility and ease challenges for partners and stakeholders who help feed our nation’s children. Other actions include:

- Publishing the [School Meal Flexibility Rule](#), which provides local food service professionals the flexibility they need to serve wholesome, nutritious, and tasty meals in schools across the nation.
- Releasing “[The Food Buying Guide](#),” a mobile app that puts critical information at the fingertips of food service professionals and makes it easier for them to plan wholesome, nutritious, and tasty school meals.
- Selecting Kansas State University to direct the [Center for Food Safety in Child Nutrition Programs](#), which will help improve food safety across all of USDA’s child nutrition programs.
- Inviting the public to submit [ideas on food crediting](#), the system that defines how each food item contributes to meal requirements under the National School Lunch Program and other federal child nutrition programs.

About 100,000 schools and institutions feed 30 million children through the National School Lunch Program and nearly 15 million children through the School Breakfast Program. Many of these children receive their meals at no cost or for a reduced price according to income-based eligibility.

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers 15 nutrition assistance programs, including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Summer Food Service Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for [Women, Infants and Children](#), and the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#), which together comprise America’s nutrition safety net.

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