National School Lunch and Breakfast: Helping America's Children Get a Fresh Start to Each School Day

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School Meals Flexibilities Rule

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Today’s Agenda

• School Meal Pattern Background
• Stakeholder input
• Permanent Flexibilities
• Questions
Goals of Child Nutrition Programs

Support American Agriculture

Improve Nutrition and Health

Support low-income families
How CN Programs Work

**USDA**
- Provides funding
- Sets program standards and policy
- Oversees/supports State agencies

**States**
- Distribute reimbursement
- Manage Program
- Monitor local operators; provide technical assistance

**Local Operators**
- Operate program and determine eligibility
- Plan and provide nutritious, safe meals
School Meal Patterns

• General meal requirements: USDA

• Menus and recipes: local choices

• Meal patterns updated in 2012
  – More fruits and vegetables
  – Whole grains
  – Low-fat and non-fat fluid milk
  – Age-based portion sizes
  – Weekly standards for calories, sodium, and saturated fat
Successes and Challenges

• **Success:**
  - Healthier meals with more fruits, vegetables, whole grains

• **Challenges in several key areas:**
  - Whole grains
  - Sodium
  - Milk
Actions Taken

- **May 2017**: Secretary issues School Meals Proclamation; FNS memo on specific flexibilities for 2017-2018
- **November 2017**: FNS interim final rule extends flexibilities through 2018-2019
- **December 2018**: Final rule provides long-term menu planning flexibility for Program operators
Developing the Final Rule

• FNS focused on public comments specific to the three menu planning flexibilities

• **Intended benefits:**
  • Reduced regulatory burden
  • Increased student participation
  • Reduced food waste
Wholesome and Appealing Meals

Children will continue to have access to fruit, an array of vegetables, whole grains, and milk.
Final Rule Flexibilities

Effective July 1, 2019
Milk Flexibility

- Allows flavored, low-fat milk in schools
- Also able to sell it a la carte
- Schools must offer unflavored milk at each meal service
- Will provide more menu planning options to increase intake
Whole Grain-Rich Flexibility

- At least half of the weekly grains offered in the NSLP and SBP must be whole grain-rich

- Other grains in the weekly menu must be enriched
No exemption requests SY 2019/20

- Beginning in 2019-2020, whole grain-rich exemption requests are not required
Sodium Flexibility

- Retains Target 1 through SY 2023-2024
- Moves Target 2 to SY 2024-2025
- Removes Final Target
Minimum Standards

• Sodium and whole grain-rich requirements in NSLP and SBP set a floor and not a ceiling
• Operators able to tailor to local needs
  • No changes required
• Meal reimbursement is based on compliance with Federal standards
Next Steps
Expected Impact

• More operational flexibility to meet student preferences
• More opportunities to incorporate local and regional favorites
• Increased consumption of wholesome meals
Looking Ahead

- Continue to provide operators with guidance and resources
- Ongoing feedback from stakeholders
- Dietary Guidelines will continue to inform overall nutrition requirements
USDA Resources

• Team Nutrition: https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition
• School Meals Policy: https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/policy