



# 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

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- School Meal Pattern Background
- Stakeholder input
- Permanent Flexibilities
- Questions



# Goals of Child Nutrition Programs

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Support American Agriculture

Improve Nutrition and Health

Support low-income families



# How CN Programs Work

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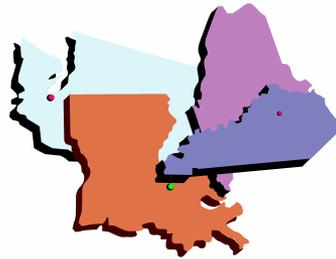


**USDA**

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

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- **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

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- **Success:**
  - Healthier meals with more fruits, vegetables, whole grains
- **Challenges in several key areas:**
  - Whole grains
  - Sodium
  - Milk



# Actions Taken

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- **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

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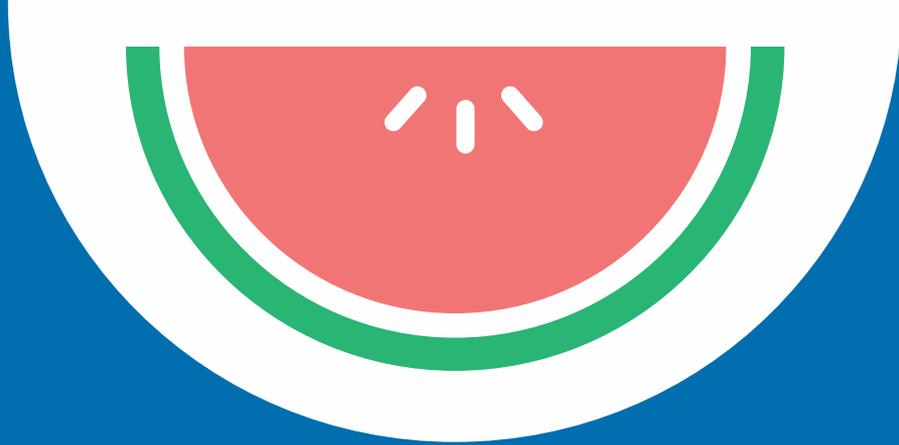
- FNS focused on public comments specific to the three menu planning flexibilities
- **Intended benefits:**
  - Reduced regulatory burden
  - Increased student participation
  - Reduced food waste



# 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

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# Milk Flexibility

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- 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

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



# Minimum Standards

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- 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

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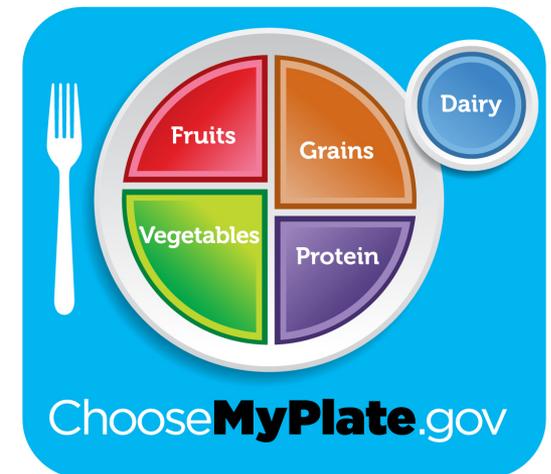
- More operational flexibility to meet student preferences
- More opportunities to incorporate local and regional favorites
- Increased consumption of wholesome meals



# Looking Ahead

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



# USDA Resources

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- **Nutrition Standards for School Meals:**  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>
- **Team Nutrition:**  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition>
- **School Meals Policy:**  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/policy>

