

Office of Nutrition

Requirements for Participating in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program.

The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in public, and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low cost or free lunches to children each school day. [National School Lunch Program | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#) Schools seeking to implement the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program will need to have the following in place at various times. Once onboarded with the state agency, schools sponsoring a meal program are referred to as Sponsors, Local Education Agency (LEA) or School Food Authority (SFA). Becoming a sponsor can be a lengthy process and will require a fair amount of time from the designated food service director and other school personnel. After a sponsor is approved to operate school nutrition programs, continued dedicated staff time is essential to program success.

Program Year (PY) Operates July 1-June 30th Annually:

PRIOR TO START OF PROGRAM:

- Basic Training** – Mandatory for new sponsors. The training course reviews all program requirements and must be completed before onboarding can occur. To sign up click the link [here](#). Each user will need to create a username and password for the site.
- New Sponsor Survey** – All new sponsors should complete the [new sponsor survey](#) The Office of Nutrition will follow up with next steps and assign a point of contact (Education Program Specialist, or EPS) to assist as sponsors move through the onboarding process.
 - Once basic training is complete and new sponsor survey filled out, sponsor should return a certificate of authority to katie.mccurdy@education.ohio.gov for processing. This will grant the sponsor access to the Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System (CRRS), and the annual School Meal Program Application.
- Procure Meal Vendor, Food Service Management Company or Skip if Self-Prep.** Should a school need to procure a caterer, vendor or food service management company, refer to the [department webpage](#) for procurement requirements and contract templates.
- Health Department and Appropriate Licensing** – Sponsors should reach out to their local health department once they establish their meal service plan to inquire about a Food Safety Inspection and the required level and license needed. This will be required prior to a pre-approval visit.

- ❑ **Meal Count Mechanism** – Sponsors are required to have a process for accurately counting meals served at the point of service. This can be a paper roster, a computer point(s) of sale system (POS).
- ❑ **School Public Media Release** – All sponsors are required to announce participation in National School Lunch or Breakfast Program via a public media release. This may be sent to a local newspaper, or on a school's website. A template media release can be found at the following link [National School Lunch Program | Ohio Department of Education and Workforce](#)
- ❑ **School Nutrition Program Staff Training** - Ensure that school meal program staff can identify a reimbursable meal and understand point of service meal counts. Schools that have meal prices must count the student when a reimbursable meal is in hand and track by the student’s name and eligibility. Any staff with a hand administering the school meal program should have civil rights training. See link for this training in resources below.
 - **Food Service Directors:**
 - All sponsors must identify a designated director that meets the hiring requirements- [Guide to Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#) (see pages 11-12)
 - The designated director has or plans to have within the first 30 days in the position, 8 hours of manager level food safety training (see page 12 of the previous link) use the following link to find accepted courses [Food Safety Certification | Ohio Department of Health](#)
 - **Training Resources:** ODE course password is “buckeyes”
 - [National School Lunch Program Meal Pattern Chart | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
 - [School Breakfast Program Meal Pattern Chart | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
 - [Ohio Child Nutrition](#) – ODE-380, ODE-310
 - [Civil Right Training](#) – ODE-150

PRE-APPROVAL VISIT:

Sponsors must be operating during the pre-approval visit and the onboarding specialist will need to see a minimum of two weeks of operational documentation (meal counts, menus, production records, etc.)

- ❑ **Assigned Onboarding Specialist and Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System (CRRS) Access**- The Office of Nutrition will assign an Education Program Specialist to the Sponsor. Specialists will walk program contacts through the next steps in onboarding, navigating CRRS and required elements of program compliance.
- ❑ **Menu Certification of Compliance** – A large part of participating in USDA School Nutrition Programs is meeting the required meal pattern as well as maintaining menu documentation. The assigned specialist will review the planned menu for compliance with USDA Meal Pattern as reviewed during Basic Training and linked above in Training Resources. The sponsor must complete Certification of Menu Compliance per the

[Certification of Menu Compliance Policy](#). Additional information is available at [Certification of Compliance | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

- ❑ **Submit Application in Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System (CRRS)** – The sponsor will complete an application packet in CRRS database annually for review by the assigned specialist for the region. During onboarding the assigned specialist will provide assistance with CRRS basics and assist in completion of the annual school meal application.
- ❑ **Access ODDEX and Complete Direct Certification** – During the onboarding process the onboarding specialist will assist sponsor with gaining access and completing direct certification (database that directly certifies students for free/reduced meals based on participation in other federally funded programs (SNAP, OWF, Medicaid, if income eligible.)
- ❑ **Benefit Issuance and Meal Counting and Claiming** – Sponsor will need to establish a benefit issuance list as reviewed in Basic Training. Meal counting and claiming will need to follow program regulations and will be reviewed at the pre-approval visit.
- ❑ **General Areas of Compliance:** The following are general areas of compliance that will be reviewed prior to the sponsor’s one-year administrative review. They should be reviewed by a specialist with the sponsor as compliance will be evaluated at the one-year review.
 1. Professional Standards
 2. Civil Rights – Media Release, And Justice for All Posters, Special Dietary Needs
 3. Menu Compliance
 4. Smart Snacks
 5. School Breakfast and Summer Outreach
 6. Food Safety/HACCP
 7. Potable Water
 8. Buy American
 9. Wellness Policy
 10. Offer Vs. Serve
- ❑ **CRRS Application Approval** – Once the specialist has confirmed the sponsor is following program regulations and any corrective actions or technical assistance from the pre-approval visit is resolved. The application will move forward and be approved. This will allow sponsors to claim meals moving forward.
- ❑ **Next Step – Review School Nutrition Program Annual Calendar** - Program requirements throughout the year listed in monthly format.

ONE YEAR ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW:

All sponsors will go through onboarding and pre-approval and in the same year, the sponsor will receive a full administrative review of program operations. The sponsor will need to work closely with the designated specialist with any program questions that may arise. The Office of Nutrition encourages sponsors to attend Basic Training as many times as needed, and to utilize the training management portal and items of interest, (a weekly newsletter with program updates) to leverage all training resources.

RESOURCES:

- [National School Lunch Program | Ohio Department of Education and Workforce](#)
- <https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Student-Supports/Food-and-Nutrition/National-School-Lunch-Program/School-Breakfast-Program>
- [How To Become A School Meals Program Sponsor | Ohio Department of Education and Workforce](#)