



USDA is asking states to pledge to make their school meals and snack programs healthier to ensure students are served nourishing foods that support lifelong healthy eating patterns.



REPLACE BREAKFAST PASTRIES WITH
WHOLE-FOOD BREAKFAST OPTIONS



PREPARE MEAT AND MEAT ALTERNATES
USING HEALTHY COOKING METHODS



SERVE ONLY 100% WHOLE
GRAIN PRODUCTS



IMPROVE SMART SNACKS
SERVED IN SCHOOLS



PRIORITIZE WHOLE FRUIT



SERVE WHOLE MILK



Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) play a vital role in supporting the health, learning, and well-being of millions of children. School meals already emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein foods, and milk as core components of reimbursable meals.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030 (DGAs) have strengthened nutrition guidance for Americans and are premised on families eating real food. The Guidelines also emphasize whole foods, protein, healthy fats, and lower sugar consumption. Federal agencies are in the process of implementing these nutrition standards into their programs, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture's updates to school meals and snack programs. The Department of Agriculture is also amid implementing its 2024 rule to reduce added sugars in cereals and yogurt, and cap added sugars at less than 10 percent of weekly calories by 2027–2028.

While these standards are phased in over several years, Governors can act now to accelerate progress and ensure students are served nourishing foods that support lifelong healthy eating patterns.

By signing on to this pledge, states—with the support of interested school districts—volunteer to implement all or some of the meaningful updates in schools participating in the NSLP and SBP as soon as feasible and within existing procurement and meal pattern rules.

By making this commitment, Governors also agree to support schools in outreach to parents—through statewide campaigns, resources, or by providing materials to help schools to message the changes they are adopting. Schools should engage parents of students to keep them apprised of changes in school meals and snacks and to ensure they have accurate information about any menu changes. By bringing parents on board as partners, schools can help these changes go beyond the cafeteria.

The six actions in this pledge align with the DGAs and are allowable under current regulations. By adopting these changes, states can help their school nutrition professionals and students be early adopters of healthier eating practices. The Administration is supportive of these changes and encourages Governors nationwide to partner with school districts to elevate these priorities within their schools.

By joining this pledge, Governors will get the benefit of sharing best practices amongst partner states and make meaningful changes to students' health and wellbeing. Pledging states will have the opportunity to share their experiences with not only the Administration, but with food service companies, producers, schools, and other institutions on improving food purchasing strategies, product formulation, and embracing other innovative ideas to advance stronger school nutrition.

The Trump Administration continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to whole healthy food for children nationwide in strong partnership with states and school districts, and looks forward to states joining us in this journey.



REPLACE BREAKFAST PASTRIES WITH WHOLE-FOOD BREAKFAST OPTIONS

- Replace pastries with whole-food options such as egg sandwiches, yogurt parfaits with fruit, whole-grain toast with nut butter, oatmeal, or overnight oats.
- Pair fruit with protein foods to improve satiety and stabilize energy.
- Adjust menu cycles to emphasize eggs, yogurt, and 100% whole grains.
- Source pre-prepared egg products like egg bites, hard boiled eggs, and scrambles, bulk yogurt, and frozen fruit that meet NSLP/SBP crediting requirements.
- Implement the added sugars cap now, rather than 2027. Serve yogurt and cereals with no or low added sugars.



PREPARE MEAT AND MEAT ALTERNATES USING HEALTHY COOKING METHODS

- Prepare animal-based protein foods such as beef, poultry, pork, and seafood using healthy cooking methods like baking, roasting, broiling, steaming, and stir-frying.
- Avoid deep-fried and breaded meat products.
- Purchase and prepare meats like roasted chicken, grilled chicken strips, and ground meats.
- When cooking with or adding fats to meals, prioritize oils with essential fatty acids, such as olive oil. Other options can include butter or beef tallow.
- Prioritize meats with limited added sugars, refined carbohydrates or starches, or chemical additives.
- Work with processors and distributors to identify compliant items that meet meal pattern crediting requirements.



SERVE ONLY 100% WHOLE GRAIN PRODUCTS

- Replace whole-grain rich items with 100% whole-grain breads and tortillas, brown rice or whole-grain pasta, or whole-grain breakfast cereals with low added sugar.
- Specify "100% whole grain" in product bids.
- Utilize commodity 100% whole-grain items available through USDA Foods.



IMPROVE SMART SNACKS SERVED IN SCHOOLS

- Avoid highly processed packaged, prepared, ready-to-eat or other foods that are salty or sweet, such as cookies and chips.
- Don't offer beverages containing added sugars or artificial sweeteners.
- Remove foods with artificial flavors, petroleum-based dyes, and artificial preservatives.
- Only offer real foods like cheese sticks, hard boiled eggs, nuts, 100% whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.



PRIORITIZE WHOLE FRUIT

- Choose fresh, canned, unsweetened dried, or frozen whole fruit instead of syrup-packed fruit, sweetened dried, or fruit juice.
- Offer sliced fruit or fruit cups prepared in-house.
- Prioritize fruits packed in water in vendor contracts.
- Expand purchases of seasonal fresh fruit through produce distributors or local suppliers.



SERVE WHOLE MILK

- The Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act and subsequent USDA rulemaking permit schools to serve whole and reduced-fat milk and excludes fluid milk from the weekly limit for saturated fat.
- Include whole milk as an option for all students to meet fluid milk requirements.