







Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs



Background: On December 13, 2010, President Obama signed Public Law 111-296 the *Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* (HHFKA). This legislation included comprehensive changes to the school nutrition environment including a final ruling for Nutrition Standards which was released in January 2012. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will continue to govern Child Nutrition Programs throughout the nation and will oversee the phase-in timeline for which the Nutrition Standards portion will be implemented. The majority of the recommended changes for lunch will be implemented by July 1, 2012. Changes occurring to the breakfast meal program will be phased-in by the 2013-2014 school year.

Key Changes Related To Nutrition Standards...

-  Increase the availability of fruits and vegetables
-  Increase the availability of whole grain rich bread products
-  Increase the availability of low-fat and fat-free dairy products
-  Reduce the overall level of sodium within meals
-  Reduce the percentage of calories coming from saturated fat
-  Eliminate foods that contain trans fat

The key changes are based on recommendations from the Institute of Medicine report “*School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children*” and are intended to have greater alignment with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The ultimate goal is to provide nutrient-dense meals (high in nutrients and low in calories) that meet the dietary needs of school children.

Meal Pattern Design Changes

School meals must offer students the opportunity to create a meal from a variety of food groups. The food groups include:

Grains • Meats • Fruits • Vegetables • Milk

The final ruling will allow students to decline up to two of the food groups but **will require** them to select a fruit or a vegetable with their meal.

To encourage vegetable consumption a variety of subgroups will be offered over the course of a week. The vegetable subgroups include:

Dark Green • Red/Orange • Beans/Legumes • Starchy • Other

Fruit offerings can include fresh fruit, fruit canned in juice, water, or light syrup, frozen fruit without added sugar, dried fruit, or 100% fruit juice.

The final ruling established weekly minimum and maximum ranges for both Grain and Meat offerings. The ranges per age/grade grouping are as follows:

Elementary = 8-9 Grain Equivalents and 8-10 Meat Equivalents

Middle = 8-10 Grain Equivalents and 9-10 Meat Equivalents

High = 10-12 Grain Equivalents and 10-12 Meat Equivalents

The final ruling allows fat-free and low-fat unflavored milk and fat-free flavored milk choices.