



School Meals: 5 Reasons Why It's Time to Try

Join us in promoting CT School Meals January 25 - January 29!

Introduction to this Toolkit

Things are a little different this year. COVID-19 changed the way we operate. As school district food service departments, we have all experienced changes in serving style and different methods of operation including hybrid and distance learning. These new methods are creating both opportunities and challenges for some food service departments.

We are looking for your help to get the word out about what amazing work all of our school food service departments are doing and the delicious meals that are available to help feed all the children of Connecticut. We are asking for all the support and outreach we can receive with our **School Meals: 5 Reasons Why It's Time to Try** campaign. We will be promoting through social media to engage all of our sponsors, partners, organizations, agencies, friends, family and YOU to help us spread the word online about free school meals for Connecticut children 18 and under. With so many more families struggling due to the pandemic, getting the word out to families about this program is more crucial than ever.

Please join us for our first ever “School Meals: 5 Reasons Why It's Time to Try” Promotional week to help us promote the program by posting and sharing information January 25 through January 29, 2021! We've created this toolkit to help you easily promote CT School Meals and share the message far and wide so you can be a part of our team! If you don't use social media don't worry, you can still help us by sharing and distributing the information to others. See options below for more details. Please use this information even after the promotional week. We need your help to reach families across Connecticut!

About the CT School Meals Program

CT School Meals, at no cost to families through June 2021, is part of the USDA's federally-funded, program that provides free, nutritious meals to children during the pandemic. Administered by the [Connecticut State Department of Education](#) (CSDE), meal sites can offer combinations of breakfast, lunch, supper, and snacks to kids and teens ages 18-and-under.

Some sites do not require ID or proof of need or residency. CT was granted federal waivers to allow parents/guardians to pick-up grab & go meals at many sites, and also provide multiple meals to last more than one day. This adjustment encourages social distancing, makes meals sites more accessible, and ensures kids have enough to eat throughout the week. To find a site, families can use the CSDE District Site Participating List. Please reach out to your local school district or check the [SNACT website](#) for more information.

Ways to share this information and have your district participate

If you do not participate in or are not familiar with social media do not worry, you can still help with the campaign. Please share this information with principals' newsletters, the superintendent's newsletter, your district website, local PTO groups, local parent groups, student groups, etc.

We are looking to show how students and families are impacted by having school meals available at no cost to them. Any way we can highlight the benefits of school meals helps the campaign.

THE TOOLKIT

Images/Graphics - Items need to be downloaded to be able to copy and paste.

Click on the image and find the three dots in the upper right corner and select download. The image will then open in a new window and you will be able to edit.

[Click here for the google file of graphics](#)

Please email execdir@snact.org or biagettie@guilfordschools.org with any questions.

Sample graphic

To copy- right click image and hit copy. Paste and resize at your destination.



You can link your graphics to the snact information page [here](#)

Sample Messaging for Posts

- Check out your local school district for school meals at no cost to children 18 years and under. Share this post with your friends and family to let them know about the CT School Meals today!
- No child should be hungry. The CT School Meals Program provides free nutritious meals to all children 18-and-younger. Check your local school district for more information.
- School Meals are at no cost to families through June 2021! Check your local school district for more information.
- Never tried a school meal? Now is the perfect time to try! Meals are available at no cost. Many families are having their first school meals this year! Join the Team and Support Local School Meals!
- CT School Meal sites provide meals at NO cost! These are healthy meals for ALL CT children and teens 18 and under. Most sites with NO paperwork or ID required. Just show up and receive meals, no questions asked! Check your local school district for more information.
- This year most districts offer grab & go meals as well as parent/guardian pick up! Sponsors are working hard to feed kids safely during this pandemic.
- Help your community from home! Picking up or eating a meal in school supports your district's school nutrition program. By taking a meal you are helping your school nutrition program. School nutrition employees are residents of the community--a strong program keeps more local people employed.
- School nutrition programs support and purchase from local farms and businesses--school meal dollars stay in and support your community.
- School Meals provide complete meals that feature fruits, veggies, proteins, whole grains, and dairy. Research shows that students who participate in school meal programs consume more fruits, vegetables and milk during meal times.

Suggested Hashtags for Social Media Posts

- #5ReasonsWhySchoolMealsCT
- #ItsTimeToTrySchoolMealsCT
- #CTSchoolMeals
- #NoCostSchoolMealsCT
- #SupportLocalSchoolMealsCT
- #SchoolMealsatHomeCT

Suggested Tags for Social Media Posts

- SNACT (@SNACT on Facebook, @MySnact on Twitter, @snaofct on Instagram)
- End Hunger CT! (@endhungerct on all platforms)
- CT Summer Meals (@ctsummermeals on all platforms)
- FoodCorps (@FoodCorpsConnecticut on all platforms)
- CT Dept of Education (@Connecticut State Department of Education on FB, @EducateCT on Twitter, & @educate.ct on Instagram)
- New England Dairy (@NewEnglandDairy on all platforms)
- Connecticut Dairy: (@CTDairyFarms on FB, @connecticutdairy on Instagram)

'Tag, You're It!' with Friends on Social Media to Spread the Word

Post the following message to your social media accounts, and tag 5 of your friends!

FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM: School Food Service needs your support! That's why it's crucial to raise awareness about these programs serving meals at no cost to families across CT. SHARE this message on your social media profile and TAG 5 friends so they can do the same!

www.snact.org #SchoolMealsCT

TWITTER (must click (+) to add another tweet to tag friends because of character limit):

School Food Service needs your support! That's why it's crucial to raise awareness about these programs serving meals at no cost to families across CT. SHARE this message on your social media profile and TAG 5 friends so they can do the same! www.snact.org #SchoolMealsCT

A Blurb to Include in Promotional Emails/Newsletters

School Meals: 5 Reasons Why It's Time to Try Support Local CT School Districts

CONNECTICUT - CT School Meals at no cost to families is a [USDA](#) federally-funded program administered by the [Connecticut State Department of Education](#) (CSDE) and provides free nutritious breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and snacks to children 18-years of age and younger, no questions asked at most sites. This year, through federal waivers, many sites have the added flexibilities to improve access to meals, including: allowing parents and guardians to pick up meals; offering multiple meals (breakfast and lunch, or meals for multiple days) during one pick-up; and allowing those meals to be consumed off-site. This is through June 2021!.

All children age 18-and-under can receive meals at no cost. Your local school district needs your support to continue to feed the children of Connecticut. If you already enjoy school meals we thank you and ask that you reach out to a friend or family member for them to try too. If you have never tried a school meal now is the time to go out and support your local community and school!

Parents/Guardians should double check with their local school district and the CSDE List of participating districts.

SNACT Contacts:

Erica Biagetti, 2020-2021 President
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SNACT: www.snact.org / Social Media

Sample Brief to Ask Those in Your Networks to Help Promote

Dear [Partner, Organization, Group, etc.],

Please join us in helping to spread the word about **School Meals: 5 Reasons Why It's Time to Try**. School districts need your support to help their food service departments continue to serve the children of Connecticut. CT School Meals at no cost to families is a USDA federally-funded program administered by the [Connecticut State Department of Education](#) (CSDE) and provides free, nutritious meals to all children age 18 and under through the end of June. No ID or proof of need is required at most sites. Sites serve combinations of breakfast, lunch, supper, and snacks.

We will be joining SNACT for their **School Meals: 5 Reasons Why It's Time to Try** Campaign January 25th through 29th, where we will engage online to promote local school district food service programs. They have put together a [social media toolkit](#) to make it easy to promote - and you can even continue to use it well after the promotional week ends, since many sites operate till June 2021. We hope that you will join us in increasing awareness of these very important programs, so that families know that there are meals at no cost accessible to their children, especially during these uncertain times. Thank you in advance for your support!

Best,

[Your Name]

Share this Toolkit

Link to share:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LXayhb0uljWLTszmVXi4DjpFsm6pgrb1Yln-4CK48u8/edit?usp=sharing>

Calendar and Weekly Plan

Please see the below schedule that SNACT will be following for the week to highlight the benefits of school meals. Please feel free to follow this schedule or just post, share, comment about any aspect of school meals! You do not have to follow the schedule to participate.

Monday Jan 25

Theme: **School Meals are available at no cost to families**

#nocostschoolmealsct

Food Corps video from:

Possible posts:

- School meals help extend a family's grocery budget
- School meals reduce the stress of preparing breakfast and lunch at home
- Children enjoy having a familiar meal whether they are in school or at home
- By taking a meal families ARE NOT taking meals away from someone who needs it more and ARE NOT costing their district money.

Tuesday Jan 26

Theme: **School Meals are healthy and nutritious**

#ctschoolmeals

Food Corps video from:

Possible posts:

- School meals meet strict federal and state guidelines so that children receive balanced and nutritious meals.
- SN professionals prepare delicious meals that meet federal guidelines and can be served safely to students whether they are in the cafeteria, classroom or picking up meals to eat at home.
- Research shows that students who participate in school meal programs consume more fruits, vegetables and milk during meal times.

Wednesday Jan 27

Theme: **School Meals are available to all children aged 18 and under**

#SchoolMealsatHomect

Food Corps video from:

Possible posts:

- School Meals are available to all children because of federal funding from the USDA.
- There are no income guidelines or paperwork.
- Meals are offered at no charge whether children are dining in school or picking meals up to eat at home.
- Many districts offer weekend and holiday meal boxes as well.

Thursday Jan 28

Theme: **School Meals support local farms and businesses**

#SupportLocalSchoolMealsct

Food Corps video from:

Possible posts:

- School nutrition programs support and purchase from local farms and businesses - school meal dollars stay in and support your community.

Friday Jan 29

Theme: **School Meals support your school district**

#schoolmealsct

Food Corps video from:

Possible posts:

- Picking up or eating a meal in school supports your district's school nutrition program. By taking a meal you are helping your school nutrition program.
- School nutrition employees are residents of the community - a strong program keeps more local people employed.

Use this tool kit even after the week we are promoting.

This information helps us build participation and outreach to those who don't know how great school meals are.

Thank you for all your support of school meals!

Social Media 101 (Thank you SNA, adapted from NSBW tool kit)

- 1.** Identify the social media platforms you will use in your marketing efforts. You do not need to manage them all equally, but you shouldn't ignore any channel completely. Remember that posts should be tailored to reach different audiences (Facebook for parents, Instagram for students, Twitter for local media). They can be similar in tone, information and call to action, but should not be identical.
- 2.** Consider your campaign goals . Reflect on how social media can help you meet these goals. What messages are most important to convey and which platforms lend themselves best for your desired outcome? Who on your team can you enlist to help with social media?
- 3.** Develop a timeline for each social media platform. Think in terms of momentum. When do you want to start "teasing" your event and activities? When is it important to convey more details? As the big week approaches, your posts should become more frequent. But take care to find fresh messages and visuals or photos each time so users don't tune out. You can also pre-schedule posts on Facebook and Twitter.
- 4.** Decide which hashtags you will use on all Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts about your campaign as an easy way for you to track and share social media activity.
- 5.** Prior to your campaign change your profile and cover photos to your campaign art. Keep these until at least a full week after the conclusion of your events and activities.
- 6.** Make sure your plan includes a few posts that promote user engagement. Maybe it's a poll, contest or a short video or even a live streaming event of your preparations or one or more of your activities.

Social Media Dos & Don'ts

DO: Use relevant hashtags to track the conversation and amplify your own posts.

DON'T: Share poor-quality photos. Learn how to stage great food photos. Shoot in natural light. Remove background items. Highlight bright colors of trays, plates and ingredients. Crop images after you've taken them, instead of using the zoom function; this will avoid a grainy quality. Practice!

DO: Use photos of nutritious menu items and create captivating captions to describe the item beyond its menu name. For example: "Our whole-grain buttermilk pancakes are light and fluffy and cooked fresh on the griddle." "Tomorrow is Pizza Bagel Day! Don't miss this melty delicious way to start the morning."

DON'T: Post any photos of students without understanding your school/ district policy regarding media releases. Check with the principal or communications office for guidance.

DO: Be intentional about the audience for each social platform. Tailor your messages and images accordingly.

DON'T: Give in to anxieties about being a social media novice. This is a great occasion to play with the different tools available on social media and learn to grow. Don't let "perfection become the enemy of the good." Your efforts may seem rough compared to those of other districts, but you'll get there!

If you don't have an official district/ school meal program social identity, SNACT loves to share member photos through our channels. If you post to your personal pages or in a group, tag us on [Facebook \(@SNACT\)](#), [Twitter \(@MySnact\)](#) and Instagram ([snaofct](#)).

DO: Use different tools to increase engagement, such as compelling photos, infographics about school meals, links to relevant content, resources from SNA and SNACT, a compelling human interest story in the media, a poll, a video or a live event.