



New Director CHECK POINTS

Fall Edition

Start Planning Now

VERIFICATION

Verification is the process used by School Food Authorities (SFAs) to confirm selected students' eligibility for free and reduced-priced meals. This process is required when eligibility is determined through the application process, not through direct certification.

Regardless of whether you accept applications, all SFAs are required to complete the Verification Report found on the LINQ CNIPS Site. Deadlines range from October 1 - November 15, annually.

Take time to watch the Verification Webinar to make sure you're completing what's required on time. [Click here to watch the webinar.](#)

HOLIDAY MEALS

Holiday meal service will be a wonderful, but exhausting undertaking for your kitchens. It's a great opportunity to celebrate with families as well as boost non-program food sales. Here are a few questions to consider, well in advance of the upcoming holiday season:

1. How have the holidays previously been celebrated in your school system?
2. Do any priority stakeholders wish to make changes?
3. Will parents be invited to attend meal service? If so, what logistics should be considered?
4. What will you have on your menu? Are all items available for purchase in the quantity needed? Check with local grocers or supplemental vendors for off-bid items.
5. How will you price this special meal service for participating adults?
6. When will you need to begin preparing the menu items?
7. Will overtime or extra shifts be available?

Staff Development

MANAGER MEETINGS

Have you established a consistent routine for meeting with your kitchen managers? These leaders are the backbone of your school nutrition program and their influence extends beyond operations to your own professional well-being.

Taking time to plan intentional, well-organized meetings with your managers is one of the most effective investments you can make. These meetings foster open communication, stronger team cohesion and shared ownership of program goals.

ADVICE FROM THE FIELD:

1. **Be a Transparent Leader** - Own your strengths and weaknesses
2. **Focus on Data** - Use real numbers and examples to guide discussions and set goals (e.g., participation, food costs)
3. **Encourage Collaborative Problem-Solving**
As a nod to your managers' professional history and experience, create space to share challenges and brainstorm solutions together.

Dates to Remember

- [Table Talk Webinar](#): October 1, 2026 at 1:30.
- Begin scheduling your NSLP/SBP On-Site kitchen reviews. All sites must be reviewed annually prior to February 1. Review forms are in the LINQ Download Forms section.
- ALSDE Fall Conference, Point Clear, AL November 17-20, 2026 [Register Here!](#)
- ASNA Spring Conference, Huntsville, AL February 25-28, 2027





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COMPLIANCE & FOOD SAFETY

PRODUCTION RECORDS

Now is a great time to check up on the accuracy of your kitchen's production records. Production records are an invaluable piece of documentation in school food service. Want more training?

What should you be looking for?

- Food items with serving sizes that match your planned menus
- Planned, prepared, and served numbers (which should never exactly match)
- Temperatures (final prep, holding, cooling)
- Documentation of leftovers and discards (how much and how often is food leftover?)
- Date, manager signature, and comments

FOOD BUYING GUIDE (FBG)

Food costs are incredibly high right now. Being sure that your staff are ordering the correct quantity of food items an important responsibility as a director. Please take a moment to explore and share this valuable USDA resource with your team. If you have veteran managers, they are likely very familiar with this tool in paper form.

The online, interactive Food Buying Guide (FBG) is designed to support Child Nutrition Program operators in making informed, cost-effective food purchases while ensuring compliance with meal pattern requirements for program reimbursement.

 Access the Food Buying Guide:
<https://foodbuyingguide.fns.usda.gov>

 Explore Training Modules:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/fbg/training>

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

CNP ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Details regarding your program's CNP Annual Financial Report will be released soon. This comprehensive analysis provides valuable insight into the financial health of your program from the previous fiscal year.

ADVICE FROM THE FIELD

- **Locate last year's report.** If you're unable to find it, reach out to your area specialist—they'll be happy to send you a copy. Look through the report to familiarize yourself with items being asked for and terminology used.
- **Read the instructions carefully.** When you receive this year's workbook, take the time to read the first three pages of the document. These pages contain essential guidance that will save you time and help ensure accuracy.

Taking a few moments to prepare now will make the reporting process smoother and more efficient.

LOOKING AHEAD

UNEXPECTED SCHOOL CLOSURES

As we move into the months ahead, we can anticipate potential school delays, early releases, and full-day closures due to severe weather conditions. In order to ensure smooth operations and protect food safety and inventory, please take time now to confirm that you are included in all relevant weather-related communications with district leaders. You'll need to make critical decisions promptly in the event of a closure. Have a plan in place!

