



Child Nutrition Resource Round-Up: March 2026

This newsletter is a round-up of our most recent child nutrition resources and information. Highlights include our tip sheet for schools preparing for April 1 direct certification, upcoming webinars, and new SNAP outreach resources for schools. More on what's coming in April below!

Attention Schools: It's Time to Prepare for April 1 Direct Certification

Direct certification is a win-win for schools and students! Under [New York's universal school meals law](#), all schools must conduct [direct certification](#) at least three times per year to certify children eligible for free school meals without an application.

Strong direct certification throughout the year benefits schools and families, as it:

- **Helps sustain universal school meals:** by maximizing federal reimbursements.
- **Reduces administrative work for the district:** Leveraging direct certification best practices can help your school collect less individual household income information—either through free and reduced-price applications or individual household income forms. Schools often need this information for purposes outside of their school meal program.
- **Ensures that eligible students are connected to other benefits, like Summer EBT.**

April 1 direct certification is important for schools operating the [Community Eligibility Provision](#) (CEP). This data is used for CEP applications and recertifications. Schools reaching the end of their four-year CEP cycle may need to recertify this year, **but any**

CEP school can renew its cycle during the annual application period. If schools see an increase in their direct certification enrollment, we strongly encourage them to reapply for CEP.

Learn more about direct certification best practices from our [tip sheet](#).

Need individualized help? Reach out to Francesca.DiGiorgio@HungerSolutionsNY.org.

Download the Tip Sheet

Upcoming Webinars

Fueling Rural Futures: A Panel featuring Rural Non-Congregate Summer Meals Champions

When: Wednesday, March 25, 1-2 PM

Join our webinar, co-hosted with No Kid Hungry New York, for a conversation with rural non-congregate (RNC) summer meal providers. This panel will feature Heidi Ottaway from Cassadaga Valley CSD and Ryan Withrow from Whitehall and Hartford CSDs, who will discuss how their operations have changed since the inception of RNC in 2023, share lessons learned, highlight best practices, and answer questions from webinar participants. [Register here](#).

SNAP Outreach in Schools: Lessons from Wayne County Schools

When: Friday, April 17, 1-2 PM

With New York's Universal Free School Meals Program, participating schools are now required to share SNAP information with families, and the new SNAP Outreach in Schools final rule clarifies how districts can meet this requirement. Join No Kid Hungry New York and Wayne County Schools for a timely conversation on their approach to connecting families with SNAP. This session is designed for school and CBO staff interested in building effective SNAP referral pathways and learning best practices to connect families to SNAP. [Register here](#).

Build A Stronger Breakfast Program with Universal School Meals: A Panel Discussion

When: Tuesday, April 21, 1-2 PM

Learn ways of reaching more students with school breakfast now that New York's Universal Free School Meals program is in place. This panel discussion will feature school nutrition directors sharing different breakfast service approaches and considerations for implementation, along with strategies to build buy-in among school leaders. Whether your school is looking to strengthen an existing breakfast program or

explore new approaches, this session will highlight real examples to help take the next step. [Register here](#).

For Schools: SNAP Outreach Resources

Support is available for schools to meet New York's new SNAP outreach requirement under the [Universal Free School Meals Program](#). Check out these new resources and support available to begin or expand SNAP outreach in your schools.

SNAP Outreach in Schools Grant

No Kid Hungry New York will support schools and community-based organizations (CBOs) in the creation or expansion of structured SNAP referral systems that connect families to SNAP enrollment and recertification assistance. This opportunity supports the implementation of **NYSED's** SNAP Outreach in Schools final rule by building direct referral pathways to trained enrollment providers. To express interest in the grant, **complete the inquiry form by March 27, 2026**. *Note: CBOs interested in applying must have an existing district partnership and work with at least three schools to be eligible.*

[Complete Inquiry Form](#)

New Factsheet: SNAP Outreach in Schools

Our new [SNAP Outreach in Schools Factsheet](#), developed in partnership with NYS PTA and No Kid Hungry, highlights the benefits of communicating to families about SNAP and provides practical next steps for schools to conduct outreach. Share this one-pager with schools to highlight the benefits of SNAP outreach, share free outreach resources, and outline best practices.

[View the Factsheet](#)

Promote SNAP to Families with our Toolkit for Schools

Use the resources in our [SNAP Outreach Toolkit for Schools](#) to promote SNAP in your communications to families. Materials direct families to a SNAP prescreening tool to see if they might be eligible and get connected with free application assistance.



Explore the Toolkit

ICYMI: SNAP + Universal Free School Meals: Make Outreach Work for Your School

This webinar outlined New York's new SNAP outreach requirement for schools under the [Universal Free School Meals Program](#). It also featured a short Q&A with Director of Food and Nutrition Services, Lisa Ostrowski of [North Colonie Central School District](#), along with best practices and resources for schools to meet this new requirement. View the [recording](#) and [slide deck](#).

View the Recording

ICYMI: CACFP Week and NSBW Week Highlights, Summer Meals Digest

It's National CACFP Week! Join us in celebrating the childcare providers, afterschool programs, and schools that serve healthy meals and snacks to children through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). This CACFP Week, take action to help

us spread the word and expand access to this valuable program. Learn more from our [CACFP Week E-Newsletter](#).

This Week 3/16-3/20: Take Action to Protect SNAP and WIC. Amid rising food insecurity and unprecedented federal cuts to SNAP, state action is needed to protect New York families' access to SNAP and WIC. As state leaders negotiate details of the final budget these last weeks of March, you can help elevate the [urgency of state investment](#) in these vital programs. ***Join the statewide Week of Action to Protect SNAP and WIC before the state budget is passed.*** Learn how you can get involved [here](#).

Now is the time to plan for Summer 2026! Check out this [e-newsletter](#) featuring summer meal sponsor deadlines, upcoming webinars and recordings of summer nutrition presentations from earlier this year.

Governor Hochul highlights 275 million free school meals served statewide since the start of this school year! Governor Hochul celebrated this historic milestone at a [press event](#) during National School Breakfast week to underscore the power of New York's universal free school meals program during its inaugural school year.



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Hunger Solutions New York

14 Computer Drive East | Albany, New York 12205

518-436-8757 | info@hungersolutionsny.org

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