



**Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-296)**  
and  
**FINAL RULE 7 CFR Parts 210 and 220**  
**Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs**  
**Fall 2015**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: What does the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (Act or HHFKA) mean to our clients?**

**A:** The 72 provisions of the Act provide for improved access to nutrition assistance through program expansion, outreach, and changes that make it easier for children to get nutritious meals at school. The Act is designed to not only improve the nutrition quality of school meals, but also to improve the entire nutrition environment in schools. The Act seeks to enhance our understanding of the causes and consequences of hunger and food insecurity among children and help inform future policy decisions on effective means of program delivery that will help advance the goal of solving the problem of childhood obesity. For additional information on the provisions of the Act, refer to: [http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/HHFKA\\_080112.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/HHFKA_080112.pdf)

**Q: When were the provisions of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 implemented?**

**A:** Beginning July 1, 2012, many of the key provisions of the HHFKA that directly impact the school lunch program either went into effect or began a phase-in period. Today a variety of program administration provisions designed to enhance access to nutritious meals for students in need, as well as new menu planning requirements and nutrition standards for school lunch meals have taken effect. Final changes to the breakfast and lunch programs and new a la carte requirements along with other administrative changes went into effect on July 1, 2014. A summary of the breakfast and lunch requirements can be found at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/dietaryspecs.pdf>

**Q: Why are school meals changing?**

**A:** The National School Lunch Act (NSLA) requires that school meals reflect the latest “Dietary Guidelines for Americans.” In addition, provision 201 of the HHFKA amended the NSLA to require the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to update menu planning and nutrition standards for school meals based on current science. Millions of children eat school meals every day across the country, so ensuring that these meals provide healthy choices and can help teach balanced eating is an important way to impact childhood obesity and the associated health risks. We also know that more than 16 million children live in households that are experiencing food insecurity and school meals can be a significant source of nutrition for them. More information on why these changes are important for child health can be found here: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pressrelease/002312>

**Q: What's different about the menu planning requirements and nutrition standards for school meals?** **A:** This is a summary of the changes you can expect to see to breakfast and lunch meals in School Year 2015-2016:

#### All Meals

- Menu planning requirements are grouped by grades – K thru 5, 6 thru 8 and 9-12 - that better correspond to children's changing nutrition needs.
- There are daily minimum portion sizes and weekly number of portions required for each meal at each grade level, to ensure sufficient calories and essential nutrients are provided.
- Students must take at least ½ cup serving of fruit or vegetable at every meal to ensure adequate intake of essential vitamins and minerals.
- All breads and grain products must be whole grain-rich to provide important nutrients and fiber.
- Dairy products and milk contain 1% fat or are fat-free to limit saturated fat. Flavored milks will be fat-free only to maximize nutrient density. Two different fluid milk selections must be offered at each meal.
- Added trans fats have been eliminated from all foods.
- Nutrition standards include age-appropriate calorie ranges by grade level. There is a limit of less than 10% of calories from saturated fat and the first sodium limit designed to help reduce the overall sodium in children's diets is now in place, as the first step in meeting long-term public health goals

#### Lunch

- A reimbursable lunch includes foods from all 5 food groups (meat, grain, vegetables, fruit and milk).
- Menus planned for grades K-8 must offer at least 1 serving of grain each day, while grades 9-12 must have at least 2 servings. The minimum weekly offering varies as well, with at least 8 servings for grades K-8 and 10 servings for grades 9-12.
- Meat and other protein sources also must be offered in daily minimum portions of 1 ounce equivalent serving for grades K-8 and 2 ounce equivalent serving for grades 9-12, with minimum weekly total amounts of 8 servings for grades K-5, 8 servings for grades 6-8 and 10 servings for grades 9-12.
- Weekly vegetables requirements are designed around 5 sub-groups to ensure that meals provide a wide variety of essential vitamins and minerals found only in these important foods. Each week menus must include the following minimum quantities:
  - ½ cup dark green vegetables (broccoli, spinach, greens) for all grades;
  - ¾ cup red/orange vegetables (carrots, sweet potatoes, tomatoes) for grades K-8 and 1 ¼ cup for grades 9-12;
  - ½ cup legumes (dried peas and beans) for all grades;
  - ½ cup starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn, peas, lima beans) for all grades;
  - ½ cup other vegetables (green beans, squash, celery, cucumbers) for grades K-8 and ¾ cup for grades 9-12; and
  - 1 cup additional vegetables (from any group) for grades K-8 and 1 ½ cup for grades 9-12.
- Each day students in grades K-8 must be offered at least ½ cup fruit, Grades 9-12 must be offered at least 1 cup fruit. Juice cannot be more than 50% of the fruit offerings each week.
- Under the Offer vs Serve requirement, menus must include foods from all 5 food groups in the minimum quantities outlined above. Students may decline 2 foods but one item selected must be a ½ cup of vegetable or fruit.

## Breakfast

- A reimbursable breakfast includes grains, fruit/vegetable and milk components.
- All grade groups must offer at least 1 serving of grain each day. The minimum weekly offering varies by age/grade group: 7 servings for grades K-5, 8 servings for grades 6-8, and 9 servings for grades 9-12.
- Schools may offer a meat/meat alternate in place of part of the grains component, after the minimum daily grains requirement is offered in the planned breakfast.
- Schools must offer at least 1 cup of fruits and/or vegetables to all age groups. Vegetables and fruits may be offered interchangeably and may include juice; but juice cannot be more than 50% of the fruit offerings each week.
- Under the Offer vs. Serve requirement, students must be offered at least 4 food items in the minimum daily portion. They must select at least 3 food items with one selection being ½ cup fruit.

For more information visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/dietaryspecs.pdf>

### **Q: What other changes have we seen?**

**A:** In addition to the menu and nutrition changes outlined above, students will continue to see signage on every serving line to help them understand what makes up a reimbursable meal; and to ensure that students do not inadvertently take extra items that would be charged at a la carte prices. Students will also continue to see changes in the foods and beverages sold as a la carte choices, as schools comply with the new “Smart Snacks in School” standards that went into effect on July 1, 2014. This regulation requires that each serving of foods and beverages sold to students meet specific nutrition standards to ensure nutrient density and eliminate excess added fats, salt and sugars. The HHFKA also focuses on nutrition education, so information will be available for students to see how their food choices fit into a balanced meal.

We are excited to see students accepting the healthy whole grains and other nutritious foods that are already offered; and we encourage families to try some of the items from the school menus for your meals at home! Together, we truly can make a difference in improving student health. We hope that you will consider school meals as an investment in a healthier future for your children. For more information, visit [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation)