# SNP Memo #2021-2022-35

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**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA   
Department of Education**

DATE: April 15, 2022

TO: Directors, Supervisors, and Contact Persons Addressed

FROM: Sandra C. Curwood, PhD, RDN, ***Sandy***

## SUBJECT: Transitional Nutrition Standards for Milk, Sodium, and Whole Grains

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update to school food authorities (SFAs) and community nutrition program sponsors of recent guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) on the final rule for transitional nutrition standards. The transitional standards support the continued provision of nutritious school meals as schools return to traditional school meal service following the use of COVID-19 meal pattern flexibilities. The standards are considered transitional because they are in effect for school years 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 while the USDA updates the meal pattern standards for SY 2024–2025 to better align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020–2025.

USDA guidance on transitional nutrition standards includes:

* [USDA Webinar for State Agencies and SFAs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Sodium, and Whole Grains](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/transitional-standards-milk-sodium-whole-grains-webinar-state-agencies-sfas)
* [SP 04-2022, CACFP 04-2022: Question and Answer Guidance on the Final Rule *Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium* Effective July 1, 2022](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/question-answer-final-rule-transitional-standards)
* [SP 05-2022: Meal Requirements Under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Questions and Answers for Program Operators Updated to Support the Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Effective July 1, 2022](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/sp052022-questions-answers-program-operators)

These guidance documents address the following key provisions of the final rule:

* **Flavored Milk** - The rule allows schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to offer flavored, low-fat (1 percent) milk at lunch and breakfast and as a beverage for sale a la carte, and requires that unflavored milk (fat-free or low-fat) be available at each school meal service. For consistency across programs, the rule extends the transitional milk requirements to the Special Milk Program for Children (SMP) and to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for children ages six and older and adult participants. This rule also clarifies that lactose-free and reduced-lactose fluid milk meet the SMP and the CACFP requirements for fluid milk to provide consistency across all child nutrition programs.
* **Whole Grains** - The rule requires that at least 80 percent of the weekly grains in the NSLP and SBP be whole grain-rich; the remaining weekly grains offered must be enriched.
* **Sodium** - The final rule retains Sodium Target 1 for the NSLP and SBP through school year 2022–2023, retains Sodium Target 1 for the SBP in school year 2023–2024, and institutes a Sodium Interim Target 1A for the NSLP for school year 2023–2024.

The USDA Webinar for State Agencies and SFAs includes all information on the transitional standards, including the updates to the milk, sodium, and whole grains requirement.

Policy memo SP 04-2022 provides questions and answers on the final rule for the transitional standards. This Q&A memo rescinds and replaces SP 37-2019, CACFP 16-2019, *Questions and Answers on the Final Rule Child Nutrition Programs: Flexibilities for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium Requirements* dated Sept. 23, 2019.

Policy memo SP 05-2022 rescinds and replaces SP 38-2019, Meal Requirements under the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program: Questions and Answers for Program Operators dated Sept. 23, 2019. The majority of the questions and answers within this guidance are unchanged because they are not affected by the final rule. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service plans to develop a new rule for long-term meal pattern requirements to be effective starting in school year 2024–2025.

The Virginia Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition Programs will provide guidance on these new standards via a **webinar on April 28, 2022, at 3:00 p.m.** [**Register for the webinar in advance**](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://doe-virginia-gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_kQgFqOI_QNeNbLN9Jznl2A&sa=D&source=calendar&ust=1649507059350277&usg=AOvVaw0CLL8xAvB2R8nZkZK515uu). Details for joining the webinar will be provided upon registration.

If you have any questions, please contact your assigned SNP regional specialist.

SCC/LB