

School Nutrition Unit

School Year 2023-24 Impact Report



COLORADO
Department of Education

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Letter from the Executive Director

Brehan Riley, MS, RD, SNS



Another incredible year to reflect on our important work to nourish young bodies and minds while working to end childhood hunger in this great state. Join me in celebrating all we have achieved together this past year.

This report shares how we're supporting the child nutrition community through innovation, training and partnerships, and the impact of those efforts. It also gives us a glimpse at what's to come in ensuring all children and teens have access to healthy meals.

We continue to remain customer focused by listening to your needs, remaining flexible and committed to program expansion. We are excited to support you with our newest initiatives, including Healthy School Meals for All, Direct Certification – Medicaid, Summer EBT and Farm to School. These programs are designed to increase participation, reduce stigma and promote healthy eating habits.

Thank you to our team, sponsors and partners for their passion and commitment to serving healthy meals to all. Our dedication to program development and expansion for Colorado families ensures our children are nourished and ready to learn.



Vision

Nourish young bodies and minds. End childhood hunger

Mission

We support the child nutrition community through innovation, training and partnerships to ensure all children and teens have access to healthy meals.

Values

Passion: We are distinguished by our people who bring skill, experience and commitment to service.

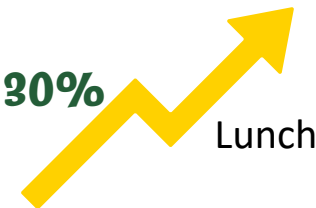
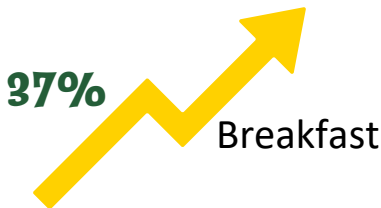
Customer Focused: We build meaningful relationships, collaborate and empower.

Growth: We are committed to innovation, learning and continuous development.

Meals and Snacks Served

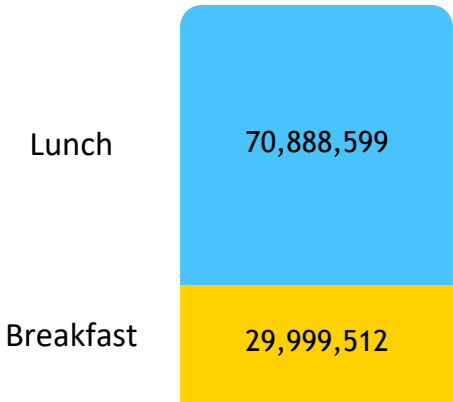
National School Lunch Program & National School Breakfast Program

School Year 2023-24 saw significant **increases in breakfast and lunch participation**, compared to the previous school year:

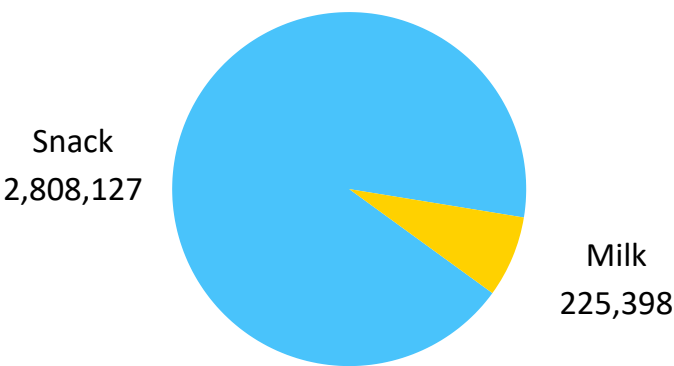


Total Meals for School Year 2023-24 (July 2023 - June 2024)

100,888,111
Total Meals Served*

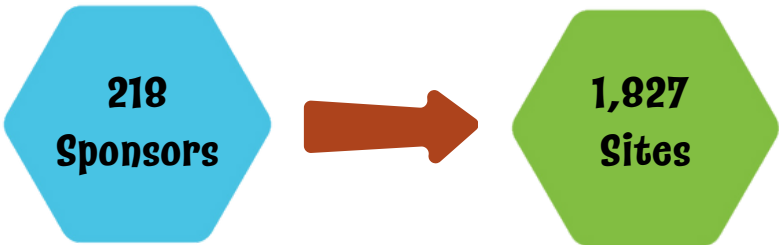


3,093,525
Snacks & Milk Served*



*Note: Meal counts are subject to change due to claim adjustments/revisions.

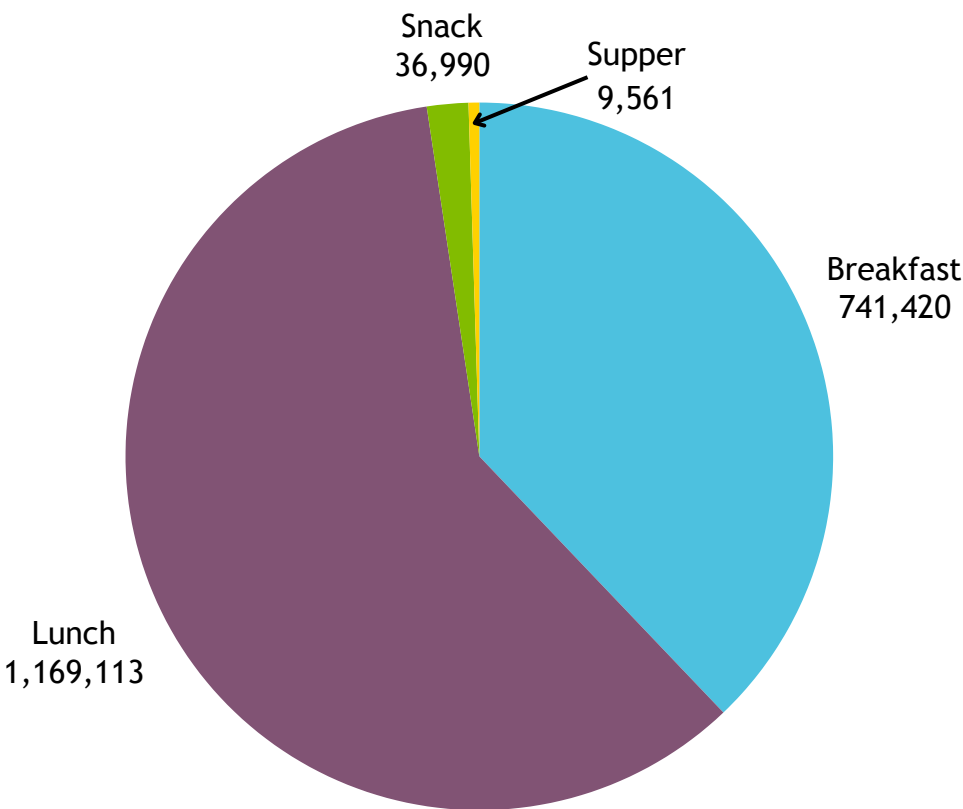
Sponsors and Sites for School Year 2023-24



Meals and Snacks Served

Summer Food Service Program

Total Meals for Summer 2024 (May - Aug 2024)

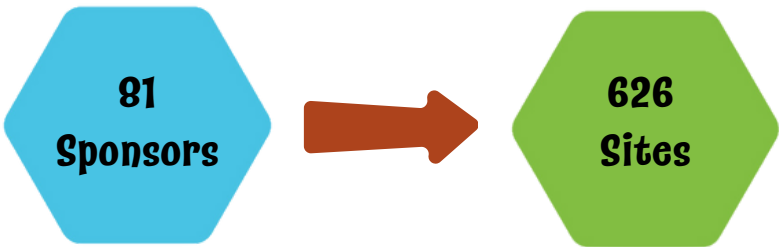


1,957,084
Total Meals Served*

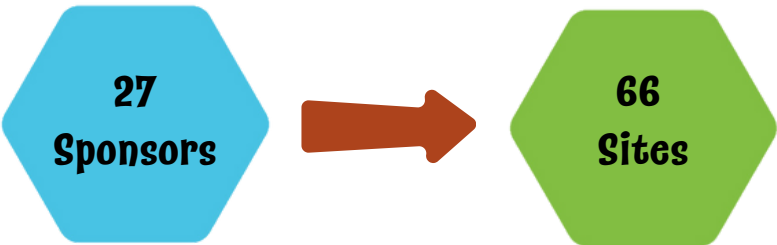
Sponsors served over 588,000
take home meals

*Note: Meal counts are subject to change due to claim adjustments

Sponsors and Sites for Summer 2024



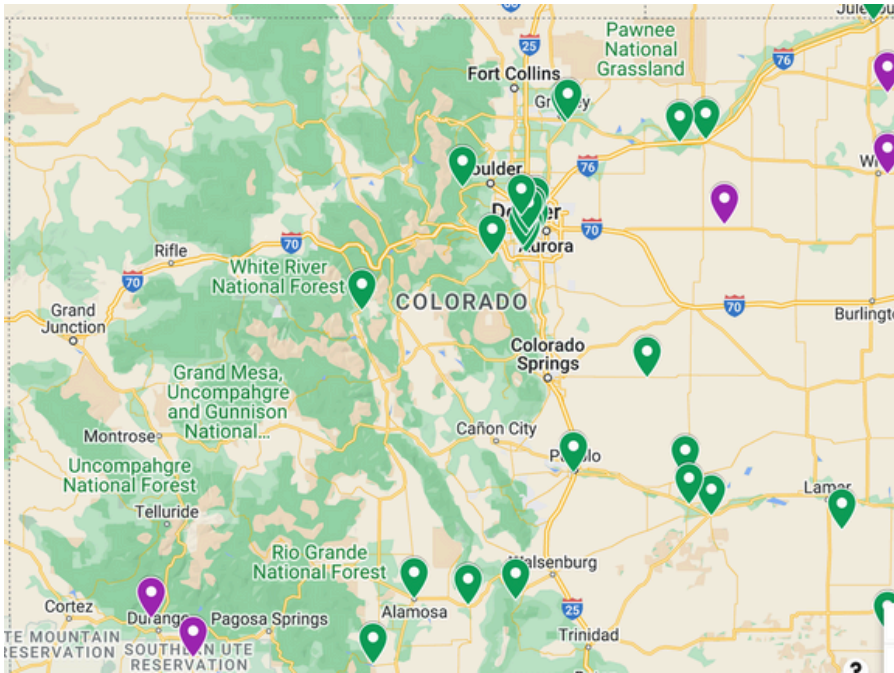
Of these sponsors and sites, the following participated in **Meal Service that allowed meals to be taken home:**



Meals and Snacks Served

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

33 sponsors and 176 sites operated FFVP in School Year 2023-24



\$3,717,926
Funding to
Districts

3.3

Average Number of Days per week
FFVP was offered to students



School Nutrition Program Updates

Healthy School Meals for All

100%

Eligible sponsors
opted in to HSMA

In the first year of HSMA implementation, all eligible sponsors operating Child Nutrition Programs opted in to the program which included 183 sponsors at 1,765 sites. Statewide, school meal participation saw significant growth, with breakfast participation rising by 37% and lunch participation increasing by 30% compared to the previous school year. Notably, the largest increases came from students who previously paid for their meals. Across Colorado, participation in school meals increased. As noted previously, breakfast participation increased by 37% and lunch participation increased by 30% from the previous school year. With this boost to participation, sponsors reported highlights and challenges:

Highlights

- Heightened excitement for school meals
- Feeding new students
- More charter school participation
- New, innovative service models to meet increased demand

Challenges

- Staff and product shortages
- Supply chain delays
- Lack of time for students to eat
- Needing to update equipment and infrastructure to meet demand

Higher than projected school meal participation led to funding shortages for the program. In Spring 2024, the Joint Budget Committee voted on changes to balance the budget. These changes included:

- No change to meal reimbursements for 2024-25 School Year
- Delay grant and technical assistance programs
- Extend the Local Food Program pilot to 2024-25 School Year
- Create an Advisory Group to begin meeting in June 2024 to provide options for future legislation to balance program revenues and expenses
- Create a policy to increase collection of household income applications
- HSMA eligibility contingent on implementing CDE's recommended operating model for provisional programs, such as the Community Eligibility Provision

During Spring 2024, School Nutrition staff implemented several measures to prepare for the upcoming changes including mid-year CEP validation, determining how best to recommend operating models, and new, streamlined templates and resources for household income applications.



School Nutrition Program Updates

Summer EBT



Districts participating
in data collection

In November 2023, state legislation passed to create the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer Program that provides food benefits to students from qualifying households during summer months. Beginning Summer 2024, this permanent, annual summer program went into effect providing \$120 per eligible student on an EBT card to purchase groceries. CDE School Nutrition works with the lead agency, Colorado Department of Human Services, to provide training and technical assistance to schools and districts in their data collection to determine student eligibility. In the first year of implementation, 100% of districts provided the necessary data to ensure eligible students had additional access to nutritious foods during the summer months when they are not in school.

The Colorado Department of Human Services estimates \$66,000,000 in benefits were distributed across the state.

Direct Certification - Medicaid

Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, the Medicaid Direct Certification Demonstration project allowed districts to use Medicaid data, in addition to SNAP, TANF and migrant data, to match and identify students eligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits. This program, which is a partnership between CDE and the Department of Health Care and Financing, is anticipated to increase school meal access and participation and reduce administrative burden on districts and families. It is estimated to reach an additional 9,000 or more students each year.

Administrative Reviews & Technical Assistance Visits

Administrative reviews and technical assistance visits ensure program compliance, support program operations and provide guidance to strengthen meal programs.



Administrative Reviews completed



Technical Assistance visits completed



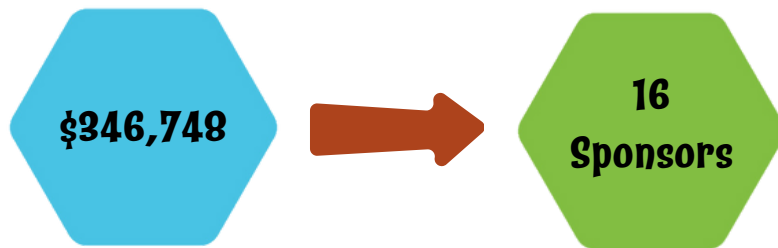
Summer Food Service Program Reviews completed



Funding to Districts

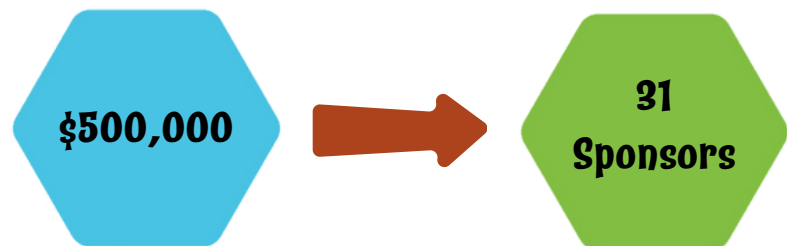
USDA Equipment Grant

CDE School Nutrition administered the USDA Equipment Assistance Grant, which allows school food authorities to apply for funds to purchase new equipment, replace old equipment or renovate existing equipment. These funds support sponsors in providing healthier meals, enhancing food safety and establishing, maintaining or expanding the School Breakfast Program.



Local Food Program

The Local Food Program funds schools and districts to buy Colorado-grown, raised, and processed foods for Child Nutrition Programs. In School Year 2023-24, 87% of purchases were raw or minimally processed, and 13% were value-added products like tortillas and bread. Top local purchases included peaches, apples, melons, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, beef, chicken, bison, and pork. Sponsors also prioritized Colorado-grown quinoa over other grains. Over half of grantees continued buying local foods beyond their LFP funding, contributing to an estimated \$2.2 million in local purchases—far exceeding the \$500,000 award. Sponsors showed commitment to increasing meal quality while supporting the the local economy, with an estimated \$851,837 economic impact.



Advisory Council for School Nutrition

The Advisory Council for School Nutrition (ACSN) plays an important role in supporting the School Nutrition Unit by offering insight and guidance on child nutrition programs. Council members also act as go-to resources for sponsors in their regions across the state. We truly appreciate their ongoing partnership and commitment.

Metro:

Jennifer Peifer, Douglas County RE1
Erika Edwards, Jefferson County R-1

North Central:

Danielle Bock, Greeley 6
Katie Cossette, St. Vrain Valley

Northeast:

Steffiney Quick, Byers 32J
Traci Berg, Holyoke RE-1J

Northwest:

Chris Delsordo, Eagle County

Pikes Peak:

Dana Elkins-Greene, Pueblo City 60
Monica Deines-Henderson, El Paso County 49
Stacey Baker, Lewis-Palmer 38

Southwest:

Gwyn Smith, Alamosa Re-11J
Ruth Frye, Alamosa RE-11J

Non-Public & Charters:

Britton Knickerbocker, Charter Choice Collaborative
Ilene Agustin, Colorado Charter School Institute



School Nutrition Training & Outreach

Training

School Nutrition provides training opportunities in a variety of ways - live webinars, on demand, and in person. School Nutrition offered multiple professional development sessions during the 2023-24 school year.

Live Webinars & In Person Trainings

**8 regional
Trainings**

**20
webinars**

**1,365
participants**

**98% of
Sponsors
Very Satisfied
or Satisfied**

Self Paced Online Training

**377
New Moodle
Users**

**21 Training
Courses**

Onboarding New Food Service Directors

School Nutrition launched a new webpage and training course to support new directors. These resources streamline onboarding and provide easy access to registration, newsletters, key deadlines and events. New directors can also join peer-to-peer virtual learning cohorts for additional support. Explore the resources at cde.state.co.us/nutrition/new_program_directors.

Communication & Outreach

School Nutrition communicates important information and updates to sponsors and other stakeholders in a variety of ways. Two primary means of communication and outreach are The Dish, a bi-weekly e-newsletter, and the School Nutrition website. The Dish provides sponsors with upcoming deadlines, training opportunities and new resources for child nutrition operations.

Sponsors have access to multiple outreach toolkits for School and Summer meals, Healthy School Meals for All, Wellness and Recruitment. Downloadable outreach materials, available on the website, include menu and postcard templates, social media posts, web banners, communication guides, flyers, recruitment videos and posters.

School Nutrition also created an outreach toolkit for Healthy School Meals for All that includes talking points, flyers, social media posts and more to help educate about this new program.

Meet the School Nutrition Team

Brehan Riley
Executive
Director



Ashley Moen
Director



Kerri Link
Director



Krista Garand
Director



Lyza Shaw
Director

Training & Personnel



Sharon Murray
Training & Comms
Manager



Madeleine Breza
Senior
Consultant



Sirui Mi
Senior
Consultant



Rachel Matson
Program Support

Programs & Compliance



Jenny Herman
State Programs
Manager



Erin Opgenorth
Programs
Manager



Viviven Skrupskis
Review Manager



Mandy Monaco
Senior
Consultant



Sarah Shannon
Senior
Consultant

Program Operations



Justin Carter
Farm to School
Manager



Nell Dochez
Senior
Consultant



Becca Boone
Senior
Consultant



Beverly Leveque
Senior
Consultant



Diane Matthews
Senior
Consultant



Michelle Monge
Senior
Consultant

Financial & Technical



Matt Hairgrove
Tech
Manager



Meghan Perkins
Data Manager



Amanda
Gersabeck
Senior
Consultant



The School Nutrition Team thanks you for your continued partnership to provide nutritious meals to students that provide the foundation for them to grow, learn and thrive.



Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. fax:

(833) 256-1655 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. email:

program.intake@usda.gov.

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