



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program

FROM: Shannon K. Yearwood, Bureau Chief *Shannon K. Yearwood*
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs

DATE: January 30, 2026

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum No. 03-26
Requirements for Submitting the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement
for School Year 2026-27

The Healthy Food Certification (HFC) statute ([C.G.S. Section 10-215f](#)) requires that every year, local boards of education or governing authorities (BOE) for public schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must determine and certify whether all food items sold to students separately from reimbursable meals will or will not meet the [Connecticut Nutrition Standards](#) (CNS). These standards also apply to all foods offered in reimbursable snacks for the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP).

“Public schools” include all public schools, regional educational service centers, the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS), charter schools, interdistrict magnet schools, and endowed academies.

This memo provides the required BOE motion language and step-by-step instructions for submitting the HFC application for school year (SY) 2026-27. Please review this Operational Memorandum carefully to ensure accurate and timely submission of the HFC Statement.

HFC Eligibility Requirements for BOEs opting to implement HFC

To be eligible for HFC during SY 2026-27 (July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027), the BOE must conduct the HFC votes by **July 1, 2026**. All votes must use the **exact motion language** provided in attachment 1.

All BOEs **must** vote on whether to participate in the healthy food option of HFC.

- If the BOE votes “yes” to the healthy food option, a vote on whether to allow food exemptions is **required**. The BOE may choose to vote on whether to allow beverage exemptions.
- If the BOE votes “no” to the healthy food option, a vote on whether to allow food exemptions is **not** required. The BOE may choose to vote on whether to allow beverage exemptions.

Beverage exemptions are defined by a separate statute (C.G.S. Section 10-221q) and are not part of the annual HFC Statement. If the BOE does not vote to allow beverage exemptions, only [allowable beverages](#) can be sold to students on school premises at all times.

Refer to attachment 1 for the required motion language and a summary chart of the required votes.

HFC Application Process for SY 2026-27

All public school sponsors of the NSLP must complete the steps below to meet the HFC application deadline of **July 1, 2026**, for school year 2026-27.

1. Schedule the required HFC votes at a BOE meeting **well before** July 1, 2026, to allow sufficient time for the BOE to approve the **draft** minutes before they are submitted to the CSDE. The HFC Statement must include the **final** BOE-approved minutes. If the district chooses to allow beverage exemptions, the CSDE recommends that the BOE conducts the vote on beverage exemptions at the same time as the HFC votes.
2. Conduct the BOE votes and prepare the BOE minutes. The final BOE-approved minutes must: 1) include the required language in attachment 1; and 2) indicate the results of each vote. Do not submit the final BOE-approved minutes until requested by the CSDE (refer to step 3).
3. **May 2026:** Complete the online HFC application module in the CSDE's Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System). Upload the final BOE-approved minutes indicating the results of the HFC votes. The CSDE will notify sponsors when the HFC application module and instructions are available.

For more information, visit the "[Annual HFC Application](#)" section of the CSDE's HFC webpage. Training on the HFC application process is available in the CSDE's video, [Completing the Application Process for Healthy Food Certification](#).

For HFC compliance resources, visit the "[Guidance and Resources](#)" section of the CSDE's HFC webpage. Training on the HFC requirements is available in the CSDE's training program, [Complying with Healthy Food Certification](#).

For questions or additional information, please contact Susan Fiore at 860-807-2075 or susan.fiore@ct.gov or Teri Dandeneau at 860-807-2079 or teri.dandeneau@ct.gov.

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Attachments: (1)

Important: This is a numbered Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) operational memorandum that contains important program information. Please read carefully and retain for future reference. All CSDE operational memoranda are posted on the CSDE's [Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Attachment 1

Required Motion Language for the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement

School Year 2026-27

This attachment accompanies the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Operational Memorandum No. 03-26: *Requirements for Submitting the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement for School Year 2026-27* and provides the required motion language for:

- the board of education or governing authority's (BOE) votes; and
- the final BOE-approved minutes.

The HFC Statement and final BOE minutes are due to the CSDE by July 1, 2026.

Use the **exact motion language** on pages 2-3 to conduct the required HFC votes and the optional vote for beverage exemptions (if applicable).

Summary of BOE Votes

Step 1: HFC Participation

All BOEs of public schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must use the language in this attachment to conduct the required vote on participation in the healthy food option of HFC.

Step 2: Food and Beverage Exemptions

Conduct the votes on food and beverage exemptions using the required language in this attachment.

- If BOE votes "yes" to HFC, complete either one of the two requirements below.
 1. Conduct the required vote for food exemptions and the optional vote for beverage exemptions using the required language in this attachment.
 2. Conduct one vote for combined food and beverage exemptions using the required language in this attachment.
- If BOE votes "no" to HFC, conduct the optional vote for beverage exemptions using the required language in this attachment.

Required Motion Language for the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement

Required Language for BOE Votes and Minutes for HFC

The required motion language for each BOE vote is below. All BOEs must use this exact language for each vote to be eligible for participation in HFC.

Vote 1: Required vote for participation in healthy food option of HFC

Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-215f, the (*insert name of board of education or governing authority*) certifies that all food items offered for sale to students in the schools under its jurisdiction, and not exempted from the Connecticut Nutrition Standards published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, will comply with the Connecticut Nutrition Standards during the period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. This certification shall include all food offered for sale to students separately from reimbursable meals at all times and from all sources, including but not limited to school stores, vending machines, school cafeterias, culinary programs, and any fundraising activities on school premises sponsored by the school or non-school organizations and groups.

Vote 2: Required vote for food exemptions for BOEs voting “yes” to the healthy food option of HFC

The motion and BOE-approved meeting minutes must reflect a “yes” or “no” vote to allow food exemptions.

The (*insert name of board of education or governing authority*) will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food sales.

Note: If the BOE votes “no” to participation in the healthy food option, a vote on whether to allow food exemptions is **not** required.

Required Motion Language for the Healthy Food Certification (HFC) Statement

Required Language for BOE Vote and Minutes on Beverages

The state beverage requirements (C.G.S. Section 10-221q) apply to all public schools, regardless of whether the district participates in the NSLP or certifies for the healthy food option of HFC.

Vote 3: Optional vote for beverage exemptions for all BOEs

The (*insert name of board of education or governing authority*) will allow the sale to students of beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the beverages are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. The “school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the beverage sales.

Required Language for Option to Combine Food and Beverage Exemptions

BOEs that vote “yes” to participate in the healthy food option may choose to combine the two separate food and beverage exemptions into one motion. This combined option replaces votes 2 and 3 above.

Required motion language for combined food and beverage exemptions:

The (*insert name of board of education or governing authority*) will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An “event” is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The “regular school day” is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. “Location” means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales.