



NEWS RELEASE

Utah State Board of Education

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School Food Service Supply-chain Disruptions Being Addressed

SALT LAKE CITY – The events of the past year and half have shown many Utahns the importance of school meals in keeping our children fed and ready to learn. Through several [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) waivers and program flexibilities](#), school food service programs are supporting student health and academic success by ensuring access to nutritious meals every day. School meals are available to eligible students free of charge this school year.

Keeping up with the increase in school meals and navigating through current circumstances has brought new challenges. Like many other industries, school food service programs are facing both supply-chain disruptions and labor shortages. Many districts are struggling to hire enough staff to fully operate their school food service program. As a result, food service programs are rethinking menu choices, making food substitutions, reducing meal service options, and even the use of “regular” trays and cutlery as a response.

What does this mean for Utah school meals? In short, reduced menu variety and meal service options, and frequent menu changes. For example, while the American appetite for chicken continues to grow each year, the chicken processing industry has been hit with their own struggles over the past

year, from the unprecedented winter storms in Texas to their own labor shortages. This now means that orange chicken, a favorite lunch entree at many schools, is on the menu less frequently this school year.

If you are interested in an exciting career in school nutrition, check your local school, human resource or school food service department website for employment opportunities—many school food service departments are hiring immediately.

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) Child Nutrition staff are working with school food service programs across the state and with partners throughout the country to understand challenges, provide support, and find solutions. Additional resources to address these challenges are available through the [School Nutrition Association](#), the [Institute of Child Nutrition](#) and [No Kid Hungry](#).

We commend everyone involved at the districts and schools for their dedication to support and provide well-balanced meals to students throughout the state. We appreciate parent and student support of the school food service program during these challenging times. School food service programs play a critical role in education.

For additional information contact your local school food service department.

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