



# Regulatory Reform at a Glance

## Proposed Rule: School Meals Flexibilities

### The Issue

In January 2020, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), responding to requests from local school food service professionals, will publish a proposed rule to provide flexibilities that will better enable schools to serve nutritious foods children will be eager to eat while also increasing program efficiency and integrity.

### The Background

For the past two years, FNS has held a series of roundtables with schools and key program stakeholders to better understand the needs and challenges faced when serving America’s children and teens throughout the school year. The changes in this proposed rule reflect requests by those who deliver FNS programs on the ground for flexibilities to better promote healthy eating and program participation. They reflect the Department’s ongoing commitment to listen and respond to the needs of its customers and program partners, and complements the December 2018 final rule, which provided milk, whole grains, and sodium flexibilities.

In addition to making changes to simplify meal service and reduce food waste, this proposed rule seeks to streamline monitoring requirements. It proposes ending the one-size-fits all requirement for a review every three years in favor of more options, a longer timeframe, and a risk-focused approach.

Taken together, these customer-focused changes are intended to help state and local program operators overcome operational challenges while maintaining program integrity, ultimately allowing for more time and resources to be focused on serving children wholesome meals—everyone’s main goal for child nutrition.



*Secretary Sonny Perdue met at USDA with local school officials to learn more about how the Department can best assist and enable their efforts to serve nutritious meals to our nation’s children.*

# Summary of Changes

This rule proposes to simplify meal pattern and monitoring requirements in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. These customer-focused changes, including optional flexibilities, are intended to help state and local program operators overcome challenges and deliver great meals more efficiently by:



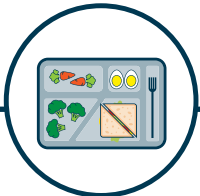
**Streamlining administrative review requirements based on past performance**, decreasing burden for experienced operators so they can focus on their main mission—serving children.



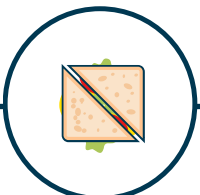
**Increasing flexibility in the “vegetable subgroups” requirements for school lunches** by giving schools flexibilities that help them increase vegetable consumption.



**Supporting a more customized breakfast program** by allowing schools to adjust fruit servings to reduce waste and encourage innovative breakfast service methods, and making it simpler to offer meats or meat alternates.



**Providing more options for schools in applying age/grade groups for meal patterns** to address schools’ unique situations and needs.



**Expanding the ability of schools to offer school lunch entrées for a la carte purchase**, allowing them to reduce food waste and manage production more effectively.

## More Information

This rule will publish in the Federal Register in January 2020, and will be open for public comment for 60 days through [www.Regulations.gov](http://www.Regulations.gov). USDA is committed to listening to and collaborating with customers, partners, and stakeholders to make these reforms as effective as possible, and encourages all those interested in school meals to comment on the proposal.