

Five Challenges to Implementing a Child Nutrition Program:

Develop solutions to enhance business operations within your child nutrition program.

1. Internal Communication:

- Define the role and responsibilities of a CND
- Develop foundational understanding of school nutrition requirements
- Communication plan between child nutrition and school administration

Solutions:

- ✓ Schedule meeting with CND, business officials, school administrators and principals at the launch of the school year to review and discuss program requirements, operational challenges, financial components and determine schedule for monthly updates.
- ✓ Develop an internal communication calendar of events to keep all parties apprised of schedule changes and important dates for students.
 - Campus staff notify CND of upcoming field trips, events and exemption days
- ✓ Required training for principals on Smart Snacks, fundraisers and school nutrition compliance.
- ✓ Informational overview for business officials, school administrators and principals on program requirements, operations and USDA regulations. Upon completion of overview, obtain a written acknowledgement of understanding.
- ✓ To improve communication with business officials, school administrators and principals, the CND should report and explain financial components of operating the Child Nutrition Program.
- ✓ Child nutrition present an overview of the program during teacher in-service.

2. Child Nutrition Staff Training

- Increase variety and frequency of trainings
- Staff morale
- Recruitment and retention

Solutions:

- ✓ To improve retention invest in employees by hosting onsite or online trainings. CNDs can access online trainings at no-cost through USDA, TDA, ESC, Safe Schools and ICN.
- ✓ Strategies to increase employee morale include:
 - Listening to a radio while meal prepping/cleaning in the food service area
 - Mailing birthday cards and letters of appreciation to food service staff
 - Theme dress-up days for Child Nutrition Staff (Super Hero, Christmas, Halloween)
 - Small food items or gift cards as a token of appreciation.
 - Pay increases or stipends
- ✓ Word-of-mouth, website and social media marketing are key methods to recruit new employees.



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3. Meal Debt

- Strategies to mitigate meal debt
- Development and/or enforcement of local mandates

Solutions:

- ✓ Outreach to households with inactive accounts to determine if the remaining funds could be donated to assist in reducing the overall meal deficit.
- ✓ Option to donate funds through the School Education Foundation to alleviate the meal deficit.
- ✓ Host a Community Fun Walk at the start of the school year:
 - Provide an option to donate funds to the Child Nutrition Department to ensure all kids have access to a healthy nutritious meal
 - Participation incentive items donated by local business
 - Free and Reduced Forms available for households to complete
- ✓ Community Organization Drive to donate toward child nutrition general fund.
- ✓ Engage and communicate with principal and school counselor.
- ✓ Provide alternative meals to students with excessive meal debt.
- ✓ School Café and email notifications to households.
- ✓ Exhaust points of contact to reach families.
- ✓ Prior to school starting, host an Open House for students and households. School will not release an early copy of the student's schedule until school meal debt is resolved.

4. School Nutrition Program Promotion

- Household promotion
- Student promotion

Solutions:

- ✓ Send school nutrition marketing and promotional materials home with students.
- ✓ Develop a presence on social media.
- ✓ Promote and engage positive aspects of the school nutrition program.
 - Celebration weeks
 - Educational activities
 - Photos of school meals
- ✓ Host a Taste Testing at events and school functions.
- ✓ Capture student feedback (surveys, taste testing and face-to-face interactions)
- ✓ Coordinate with campus level staff to increase opportunities for school meals
 - Breakfast in the Classroom and Second Chance Breakfast
 - Field Trips
 - Extracurricular Events

5. Impact of Outside Food on Program Participation and Finances

- Field trips, exemption days and off campus food

Solutions:

- ✓ Collaborate with the Local Wellness Policy Committee to develop a local policy to regulate open campus and meal delivery of outside food.
- ✓ Coordinate and explain the financial impact of field trips and exemption days campus business officials, school administrators and business officials.

