

## School Milk Packaging Shortage FAQs

### What is the shortage occurring?

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), schools in multiple states are experiencing shortages with the packaging associated with paper milk cartons.<sup>1</sup>

### What can schools do if they are experiencing an issue?

FNS has granted states the authority to determine whether their schools and Child Nutrition Program operators are allotted flexibility if they are experiencing milk supply shortages, meaning they may serve meals with an alternate form of fluid milk or without fluid milk during this emergency period.

Work with your state agencies to determine whether these flexibilities are being implemented within your state.

### Here is an example of guidance being implemented in New York state:

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has released the following guidance to school food directors:

*Schools Food Authorities (SFAs) are allowed to serve and claim meals during the emergency period by:*

- *Pouring milk from larger containers into individual cups,*
- *Offering one type of milk instead of a variety,*
- *Offering an alternate form of fluid milk such as low-fat or fat-free lactose-free milk or reduced-lactose fluid milk, or*
- *As a last resort, not offer fluid milk altogether.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/clarification-allowable-flexibilities-child-nutrition-programs-experiencing-milk-supply>

The Chef Ann Foundation is a 501c(3) non-profit dedicated to promoting whole-ingredient, scratch cooking in schools. Scratch cooking enables schools to serve the healthiest, tastiest meals so that kids are well-nourished and ready to learn. To date, we've reached more than 13,500 schools and 3.3 million kids with healthy school programming.



NYSED has reiterated that juice cannot be offered as a replacement for the milk component and SFAs must continue to follow the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program meal requirements, which include no more than half of the fruit or vegetable offerings being juice.<sup>2</sup>

### **What do schools need to do in terms of documentation and communication?**

SFAs must document the disruption and their strategies during this emergency period. If an SFA is unable to serve any form of milk, they need to notify their state agency.

### **Additional Strategies and Suggestions from the Chef Ann Foundation**

- Bulk water is a cost-conscious alternative that can be offered for schools who are experiencing a milk supply shortage.
- If SFAs are able to source milk, they should focus on having it available to be served with cereal for breakfast at their elementary schools.
- Bulk milk could be an alternative option for schools. Check out Chef Ann Foundation's [Bulk Milk](#) page on [The Lunch Box](#) for information, benefits, and resources to support bulk milk service.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cn.nysed.gov/content/allowable-flexibilities-school-meal-programs-experiencing-milk-supply-shortages>