



New York City Food Standards: 2023 Compliance Report

NYC

Food Policy

NYC

Health

Background

The [New York City \(NYC\) Food Standards for Meals and Snacks Purchased and Served](#) (the Standards) are evidence-based nutrition criteria that apply to all foods and beverages purchased and served by City agencies and their subcontractors. The Standards apply to approximately 219 million meals and snacks served each year at schools, older adult centers, public hospitals, child care centers, after-school programs, correctional facilities, shelters and other City programs. Notably, in fiscal year 2023 (July 2022 to June 2023), the Standards did not apply to meals for asylum-seekers, as these meals were procured under emergency contracts. However, beginning in fiscal year 2024, new contracts providing meals to asylum-seekers must adhere to the Standards and report on compliance.

The Standards aim to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease by improving diets. Diet-related conditions are a significant health problem in NYC, disproportionately burdening Black and Latino/a New Yorkers and New Yorkers with low incomes due to historical and ongoing systemic inequalities that unfairly distribute opportunities and create barriers to maintaining good health. For example, citywide diabetes prevalence is 12.2% compared to 14.1% for Asian and Pacific Islander New Yorkers, 14.8% for Black New Yorkers and 15.5% for Latino/a New Yorkers, with 16.3% prevalence among those in neighborhoods experiencing very high poverty.¹ Similarly, citywide hypertension prevalence is 29.6% compared to 33.2% for Latino/a New Yorkers and 37.2% for Black New Yorkers, with 35.2% prevalence among those in neighborhoods experiencing very high poverty.² By increasing access to nutritious foods, the Standards help address some of the structural inequities that make opportunities for healthy eating challenging for many New Yorkers.

Currently, the Standards set minimum requirements for offerings of fruits, vegetables, whole and minimally processed plant-based proteins, and whole grains, and limit servings of beef and processed meats. They also limit unhealthy nutrients such as sodium, trans fats and added sugar. The Standards are updated every three years to include any new federal guidelines and research, including the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Every revision of the Standards also considers marketplace availability and agency feedback. The next set of revisions is scheduled for release in 2025.

City Agency Reporting Process

City agencies are responsible for complying with the Standards and use a variety of mechanisms to monitor compliance, including incorporation of the Standards in vendor solicitations and contracts, site visits, and internal menu and nutrition analysis. As part of data collection and reporting in July of each year, agencies submit a data compliance report and one month of menus and a corresponding nutrition analysis from the previous fiscal year to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Health Department). Agencies with centralized

¹ NYC Community Healthy Survey, 2022

² Ibid.

food service operations — such as the NYC Department of Correction (DOC), NYC Department of Education’s (DOE) Office of Food and Nutrition Services, NYC Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) and NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H) — submit one month of menus and a nutrition analysis that is representative of the meals served at all program sites during the year. Agencies with decentralized food service operations — such as the NYC DOE’s Division of Early Childhood Education, NYC Human Resources Administration HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HRA/HASA), NYC Health Department’s Division of Mental Hygiene, NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and NYC Department for the Aging (Aging), which provide meals through hundreds of contracted programs — select and submit menus and nutrition analyses from five programs. The NYC Health Department then assesses each agency’s submissions for compliance with each of the different Standards. The compliance rate represents the percent of programs in compliance, averaged across all the Standards and weighted by meals served for each agency.

Limitations of this reporting process include self-reported data, a potential for selection bias and capturing only a snapshot of menu offerings. Agencies continue to work to enhance processes to assess accuracy of program site and caterer self-reporting and to improve data quality going forward.

Fiscal Year 2023 Compliance Summary

In fiscal year 2023, City agencies served over 219 million meals and snacks. During this period, agencies had an average compliance of 93% with the Standards. See the breakdown of each agency in Table 2 and the complete dataset in Appendix A.

Table 1. Agency Food Standards Data, Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023*

	Fiscal Year 2023	Fiscal Year 2022
Number of programs currently reporting	1,512	1,094
Total meals and snacks served	219,831,621	192,426,787
Average agency compliance (weighted on meals and snacks served):	93%	94%

*Based on self-reported data.

Table 2. Compliance Rate by Agency*

Agency	2023 Compliance[†]	2022 Compliance[†]
NYC ACS’ Children’s Center	97%	100%
NYC ACS’ Division of Youth and Family Justice	95%	100%
NYC Aging (home-delivered meals)	93%	96%
NYC Aging’s Bureau of Community Services	95%	92%

NYC DHS	95%	94%
NYC Health Department’s Division of Mental Hygiene	93%	99%
NYC DOC	100%	100%
NYC DOE’s Office of Food and Nutrition Services	96%	96%
NYC DOE’s Division of Early Childhood Education	55%	88%
NYC DYCD	98%	95%
NYC H+H	94%	94%
NYC HRA’s Community Food Connection	100%	100%
NYC HRA/HASA	100%	99%
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation	100%	100%

*Based on self-reported data.

†Rounded to nearest integer.

Fiscal Year 2023 Compliance Analysis

Meals and snacks purchased increased from 190 million in 2022 to about 220 million in 2023, reflecting a slow return to pre-COVID-19 meal participation rates. Meals and snacks served continue to be lower than the typical 230 million annual meals served prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The largest decrease in meals continues to be from the NYC DOE’s Office of Food and Nutrition Services, reporting 10 million fewer meals served in 2023 compared to 2019. However, between 2022 and 2023, the NYC DOE’s Office of Food and Nutrition Services saw an increase of about 11 million meals.

Beginning in 2023, the NYC DOE’s Division of Early Childhood Education required an additional 1,000 programs to report on Standards compliance, resulting in an increase of 10 million meals between 2022 and 2023. At the same time, the NYC DOE’s Division of Early Childhood Education also saw a significant decrease in compliance, from 85% in 2022 to 55% in 2023, which was likely due to the large number of programs reporting for the first time that were new to the Standards and reporting tool.

Starting in 2021, analysis of the Standards compliance rate changed to include weighting by the number of meals served by each agency. Therefore, earlier compliance data cannot be compared to data from 2021 on.

Strengthening Food Standards Compliance

The NYC Health Department supports City agencies and subcontracted programs in strengthening Standards compliance via technical assistance and monitoring.

Currently, the NYC Health Department holds two to three Standards trainings per year at agencies' request and meets with agencies as requested. In addition, the NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy and NYC Health Department convene City agency liaisons twice per year as part of a Food Standards Working Group to discuss challenges and share best practices. To verify compliance, the NYC Health Department performs site visits on an ad hoc basis.

To further support compliance, the NYC Health Department is planning to increase technical assistance and monitoring in 2024 with new menu templates, individual meetings, tailored workgroup meetings, trainings and periodic menu reviews. The NYC Health Department plans to strengthen data collection and understanding of compliance citywide with annual site visits and will randomize the selection of program menus and nutrition analyses for agencies with decentralized meal service.