NYSNA 2027 ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

GET APPROVAL TO ATTEND | A toolkit for school nutrition directors

YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION • This is a district-relevant professional learning opportunity about the funding, policies and operations of school meal programs. Attending helps you stay informed, share firsthand district experience appropriately, and brief your leadership team on what you learned.

1 Build a strong business case

District value Policy and budget decisions affect reimbursement, program sustainability, staffing, operations and the students you serve.

Why this year Universal School Meals is an important achievement—not a guarantee against future policy or funding changes. Staying engaged matters.

What you will do Participate in professional education and preparation on January 25, followed by NYSNA-coordinated meetings with state legislators/staff on January 26.

Cost + continuity Member registration: $99. Conference hotel rate: $135/night before applicable taxes; add travel and other expenses. Present your staffing/meal-service coverage plan.

Return on investment Offer a brief report afterward covering funding/policy updates, implications for the district, and useful next steps.

2 Make the ask: a 30-second conversation starter

"I'd like approval to attend NYSNA's Advocacy Conference in Albany, January 25–26. It focuses on school meal policy, funding and practical education, including meetings with state decision-makers. With Universal School Meals now in place, I want to stay informed about what may affect our district. Registration is $99, I have a plan to cover operations, and I'll share a concise briefing when I return."

3 If your supervisor hesitates

"Is this lobbying?" "Legislative meetings are part of the program, and I want to be transparent about that. There is also professional education. I'll follow district policies and will not claim to speak for the district without authorization."

"We can't spare you." "I can outline who will oversee service, staffing and urgent decisions during those two days."

"What does the district gain?" "I'll report on policy and funding developments, potential impacts on our operation, and resources we can use."

"We avoid politics." "The conference focuses on school nutrition policy and operations, not party politics. I'll distinguish my personal/association views from any official district position."

4 Do not assume the answer is no

Ask early. State the exact dates, full estimated cost, coverage plan and a specific follow-up deliverable. If approval is denied, ask what would make attendance possible next time. Your supervisor cannot approve a request you never make.

Conference information & registration: nyschoolnutrition.org/2027-advocacy-conference

COPY, PERSONALIZE & SEND

Sample email to your superintendent or school business official

Subject: Request for approval — NYSNA Advocacy Conference, January 25–26

Hello [Name],

I am requesting approval to attend the 2027 New York School Nutrition Association (NYSNA) Advocacy Conference in Albany on January 25–26.

The conference is a professional learning opportunity focused on school nutrition funding, state policy, program operations and effective communication with decision-makers. January 25 includes educational programming and preparation; January 26 includes NYSNA-coordinated meetings with legislators and their staff.

With Universal School Meals in place in New York, I believe it is important for us to stay informed about funding and policy decisions that may affect our district. This opportunity would help me understand emerging issues, share factual operational experience as appropriate, and bring useful information back to our leadership team.

The member registration fee is $99. The conference hotel rate is $135 per night before taxes, and I estimate an additional [amount] for travel and other applicable expenses. My plan to maintain department operations during my absence is [coverage plan].

Following the conference, I would provide a concise briefing on key developments, possible implications for our district, and any useful next steps. I will follow district requirements for travel, expenses and any participation in legislative meetings, and will not represent an official district position without authorization.

Would you approve my attendance? I would be happy to discuss the opportunity and answer any questions.

Thank you,
[Name]
[Title / District]

BEFORE YOU SEND

- ☐ Replace brackets with a real cost estimate and a named coverage plan.
- ☐ Add one district-specific priority (budget planning, staffing, meal access, purchasing, reimbursement).
- ☐ Check district rules for travel approval and speaking with policymakers on district time.
- ☐ Request a decision by a reasonable date so you can register and arrange coverage.

A note on the word “advocacy”

NYSNA renamed the event to emphasize professional education, shared experience and the importance of school nutrition voices. The agenda still includes legislative meetings. Describe that purpose honestly while centering the practical benefit for your district.

Registration and event details: www.nyschoolnutrition.org/2027-advocacy-conference