BULK MILK DISPENSERS IN K-12 SCHOOLS

Before deciding to make the switch to bulk milk dispensers, decision makers should consider the following factors in your evaluation:

- **Upfront Capital Equipment Costs:**
  - Reusable cups (9-12 oz.)
  - Milk dispensers
  - Tables for dispensers to sit on (stationary or mobile)
  - Dishwasher racks/dollies
  - Extra milk crates
- **School's interest and willingness to make the change**
- **Administration and teaching staff support for waste reduction**
- **Additional time commitments of staff members:**
  - Sanitizing coolers, washing cups, possibly pre-dispensing milk for students, and staff to handle the bags of milk and refill dispensers
- **Training both staff and students**
- **Are there student groups that can get involved?**

- **Lunchroom location of dispensers:**
  - Is there ample room to be part of serving line? Are there accessible electrical outlets?
  - Is bulk milk available from current distributor and if so, at what cost?
  - At what time of year would the implementation of a bulk milk dispenser have the smoothest transition?
  - Is a bulk milk program reasonable and sustainable to accommodate the number of students served within meal service time frames?
- **How many milk dispensers would your school need?**
  - Five gallon milk bag = 80 milk cartons
  - Determine current milk usage during breakfast and lunch periods
When a decision has been made to use bulk milk dispensers, decision makers should consider the following factors to prepare for implementation:

**Milk Dispenser Set-Up:**
- Location for milk dispensers to be part of serving line
- Number of milk dispensers/spouts to include mandated two milk varieties
- Adequate electric outlets
- Place to store reusable cups
- Evaluate need for lids to prevent spillage and staff time to clean up spills

**Milk Service Procedures/Staff Training:**
- Number of servings permitted for each student
- Procedure for refills to meet health regulations
- Proper storage and rotation of milk bags regarding expiration dates
- Proper temperature control
- Proper cleaning and sanitizing of milk dispensers
- Procedure for washing reusable cups
- Adequate monitoring at point of service by cashier

**Building Support From Teaching and Administrative Staff:**
- Educate staff on switch to bulk milk dispensers prior to implementation
- Promote waste reduction and environmental impact
- Promote a better school lunch experience for students, and the ability for students to mix white and chocolate milk to reduce sugar

**Student Training and Education:**
- Educate students on the use of milk dispensers prior to implementation
- Allow students to use the milk dispensers and try milk prior to starting use in the lunch line
- Put signage on the milk dispensers to educate students on how to fill cup for appropriate portion to meet nutrition requirements as well as reduce spills
- Consider having students and staff place cups directly into dishwasher racks to save time for custodial and food service staff

**Tracking Milk Consumption and Waste:**
- Consider completing a pre and post waste study looking at milk consumption, milk waste, and environmental impact

**ADVANTAGES**

- Increased milk consumption
- Students reported cold milk tastes better/fresher – opportunity to switch to 1% chocolate milk
- Milk stays cold at a constant temperature (milk cartons in an open cooler during lunch lose one day of shelf life for each hour cooler remains open)
- Meal participation may increase and milk waste decreases
- Less environmental impact with reusing cups and less waste from milk cartons
- Potential reduced cost for milk (Mil in 3-5 gallon bags may cost less than milk in individual cartons)
- Lower energy costs (Milk dispensers use less energy than milk coolers used to store cartoned milk)
- Less work for custodians (No need to rinse, bag and haul empty milk cartons to dumpster)

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Capital equipment costs (milk dispensers, tables, glasses)
- Requires dish washer and adequate space in serving line
- Overall staff time may increase slightly (Food service staff will need to refill dispensers, wash glasses, etc.)