



What is the Community Eligibility Provision?

- The Community Eligibility Provision, or **CEP** allows schools with a high percentage of eligible children to serve free meals to all enrolled students for a period of up to **four** consecutive school years
- Individual schools, groups of schools, or entire school districts may elect CEP, provided they meet the participation requirements

Combat Child Hunger in Your Community



- CEP simplifies the process by which children access healthy school meals
- CEP can extend a vital lifeline to students in need



What Makes CEP Different?

- Traditional school meal programs require schools to determine children's eligibility for free or reduced price school meals on an individual basis
- CEP does not require this extensive paperwork burden and eliminates the need to collect money from students
- CEP instead relies on data matching with other assistance programs, like the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)* and *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)*

CEP Benefits



Students:

- Enjoy free, healthy meals at school
- With universal meal service, there is no stigma attached to a free meal

Parents:

- Do not have to fill out individual household applications
- Do not have to worry about refilling meal accounts, or whether their child has an opportunity to eat at school

Schools:

- Reduces paperwork and administrative costs
- Streamlines meal service operation
- Students spend less time waiting in lines and more time eating; they are less likely to discard food and come to class better nourished and ready to learn

How do school districts operate under CEP?

- Offer free lunches and breakfasts to all enrolled students for a 4 year cycle
- Count total lunches and total breakfasts served to students daily
- Do not collect household applications for free and reduced price meals

How can school districts participate?

1. Must have an ***identified student percentage*** (ISP) of at least 40% as of April 1st of the school year prior to implementing CEP
2. Participate in NSLP and SBP
3. Have a record of administering the Programs in accordance with regulations

Who are the Identified Students?

- CEP eligibility is based on the percentage of **identified students** who are *enrolled*
- **Identified Students** are children who are certified for free school meals without the use of a household application
 - Students certified based on categorical eligibility (e.g. directly certified with SNAP, TANF, FDPIR, or based on status as migrant youth, homeless, foster child, Head Start)

How are meals claimed?

- ISP is multiplied by a factor of **1.6** to determine the % of total meals served that will be reimbursed at the Federal **FREE** rate
 - 1.6 multiplier approximates free and reduced % if applications were still collected
- The remaining % of total meals is reimbursed at the Federal **PAID** rate
- If $ISP \geq 62.5$, all meals reimbursed at **FREE** rate ($62.5 \times 1.6 = 100$)

Election level flexibilities

- Individual school
 - Allows districts to try out CEP
- Grouping
 - Provides flexibility to add in schools to avoid parent confusion
 - Brings schools with lower ISPs into CEP
- Districtwide
 - Operationally efficient
 - Easier for parent acceptability

How can LEAs elect CEP?

1

- Interested schools and districts must notify their State agencies by August 31

2

- State agencies provide training and technical assistance

CEP Facilitates Expanded School Breakfast Service

- Simplified counting & claiming facilitates alternate delivery methods, such as breakfast in the classroom, or grab & go kiosks
- Expanding SBP typically boosts participation and Federal reimbursements
- Other benefits: academic, behavior and attendance



CEP: Tried, Tested, Already Delivering Results

States have made **tremendous progress** implementing CEP in its first year of nationwide availability. In SY 2014-2015:



Almost **14,000 schools**



Over **2,000 school districts**



Total enrollment of **6.4 million children**



Schools participating in **49 States and DC**

CEP's Success Continues to Grow

- Elections likely to increase for SY 2015-2016
- Barriers being broken down
- Commitment of FNS to work with and assist States



State Legislators Can Help

Challenge:

- Allocating State & local education funding without school meals application data

Opportunity:

- Ensure clear State policy is in place
- Clearly communicate policy and guidelines

Helpful CEP Resources

- FNS Regional Offices
- Community Eligibility page on the USDA FNS website:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/community-eligibility-provision>
- **Includes:**
 - Policy guidance and Q and As
 - Program requirements/information
 - Reimbursement estimator & grouping tool
 - CEP guidance from other Federal agencies