

COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROVISION (CEP)

FACT SHEET

This provision provides a reimbursement option for eligible districts that wish to offer free meals to all students in high poverty schools without collecting household applications.

BENEFITS OF CEP

- Improve access to free school meals in high poverty areas
- Reduce administrative burden by eliminating school meal applications
- Increase program efficiency by utilizing readily available and current data to certify eligible students for meal benefits
- Make school nutrition operations more efficient and financially stronger

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- School must have a minimum percentage (40%) of identified students who are certified for free meals through means other than household applications in the school year prior to implementing CEP
- Participation in both the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP)

FACTS

- LEAs may elect CEP for all schools, a group of schools or an individual school in the district.
- Eligible school or group of schools must have an identified student % of at least 40% on April 1st of the school year prior to school year implementing CEP.
- LEAs are required to submit eligibility documentation by June 30 to begin CEP for the school year beginning July 1.
- LEAs must accurately count total breakfasts and total lunches served to students daily and report these counts monthly in SNEARS.
- LEAs will not collect household applications for free and reduced price meals on behalf of students enrolled in schools participating in CEP.
- Once an LEA has elected to participate in CEP; participation is for the entire school year. If an LEA wants to withdraw it must coincide with the end of the school year to allow for distribution of the household applications.

CLAIMING PROCEDURES

- Reimbursement for breakfasts and lunches will be based on free and paid claiming percentages applied to the total number of reimbursable lunches and breakfasts served each month.

- The free claiming percentage will be calculated in SNEARS by multiplying the identified student percentage by a multiplier factor of 1.6. This figure has been established by USDA. USDA is allowed by law to adjust the multiplier factor.
- The paid claiming percentage will be calculated in SNEARS by applying the difference between the free claiming percentage and 100 percent.
- Districts will be responsible for covering any costs of providing free meals to all students that exceed Federal reimbursement with non-Federal funds.
- CEP schools are guaranteed at least the same free claiming % for four years. If the identified student % increases during the cycle, the free claiming % increases accordingly. If the identified student % decreases during the cycle the original free claiming % remains in effect throughout the cycle.

Further information on any School Nutrition Programs can be obtained from:

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
DIVISION OF FOOD AND NUTRITION
SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS
P.O. BOX 334
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625
TELEPHONE: (609) 984-0692
FAX: (609) 984-0878**

Website: <http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/fn/>

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