

# Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Fact Sheet

This provision provides a reimbursement option for eligible districts that wish to offer meals at no cost 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

- The LEA/School **must** have an Identified Student Percentage (ISP) of 40% or greater, at one site or more, as of April 1\* of the school year prior to implementing CEP. “Identified Students” are those students who are certified for free meals without the use of household applications (for example, those directly certified through SNAP).
- The LEA/School must participate in both the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

- LEAs may elect CEP for all schools, a group of schools, or an individual school.
- The eligible school or group of schools must have an Identified Student Percent (ISP) of at least 40% as of April 1\* of the school year prior to implementing CEP.
- LEAs must accurately count total breakfasts and total lunches served to students daily and report these counts monthly in SNEARS.
- LEAs agree **not** to collect household applications for free and reduced price meals on behalf of students enrolled in schools participating in CEP.
- The claiming percent established for an LEA, group of schools, or individual school is valid for a period of 4 successive school years. Once an LEA has elected to participate in CEP, participation is for the entire school year. If an LEA wants to withdraw, special guidance will be provided by the Division.



## **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 and they may legally 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 meals at no cost to all students that exceed Federal reimbursement with non-Federal funds.
- For the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> years of a Group's 4-year participation cycle, the LEA, group of schools, or individual school may use the initial (base year) ISP to determine reimbursement, or they may use the ISP as of April 1\* of the preceding year, whichever is higher. If the ISP increases during the 4-year cycle, the LEA may elect to begin a new cycle the following school year, prior to June 30<sup>th</sup>, with State Agency approval, to guarantee the higher ISP for 4 years.

## **WHAT DO INTERESTED LEAS AND SCHOOLS DO NEXT?**

- To determine if CEP is the right fit for your district or school, contact [lorena.paredes@ag.nj.gov](mailto:lorena.paredes@ag.nj.gov) or [amy.jankowski@ag.nj.gov](mailto:amy.jankowski@ag.nj.gov) for more information.



Further information on this program, or any of the School Nutrition Programs administered by this office, can be obtained from:

**NJ DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE  
DIVISION OF FOOD AND NUTRITION  
SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS  
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TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625  
TELEPHONE: (609) 984-0693**

**WEBSITE:**

**<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/childadult/school.html>**

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