

Mar 29, 2024 – CEP allows schools to offer breakfast and lunch each school day at no cost to all students.

What is Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?

Community Eligibility Provision is a new, innovative provision that allows high need schools to serve free meals to all students while alleviating the administrative burden to collect paper applications. Community eligibility allows for a healthier student body and healthier school meal budget. Below are just a few of the advantages. Community eligibility will:

- Increase participation of children in school meal programs.
- Reduce administrative costs related to collecting a processing applications and tracking students based on their meal eligibility status. As a result of expanded student participation and reductions in administrative work, there will be stronger school nutrition programs overall.
- Afford schools the ability to no longer collect payments or use swipe cards or other systems during the meal service.
- Requires schools to serve universal free school breakfast and it is a great way to facilitate the adoption of innovative breakfast models, such as Breakfast in the Classroom.
- Help students because families no longer have to complete meal applications and it can reduce stigma because all students are eating meals at no charge, regardless of their income status. And studies show that well-nourished children can focus in class and ultimately do better in school.

Additional Resources can be found in [USDA's CEP Resource Center](#).

What is Required to Participate in CEP?

To be eligible, LEAs and/or schools must:

- meet a minimum level of "identified students" for free meals in the year prior to implementing Community Eligibility;
- agree to serve free breakfast and lunches to all students;
- and agree to cover with the non-Federal funds any costs of providing free meals to students above the amounts provided by Federal assistance.

What is an "Identified Student"?

Identified students are students who are approved as eligible for free meals and who are not subject to verification. This includes students directly certified for free school meals through participation in:

- Directly certified students and extension of direct certification benefits to other household members
- Homeless students certified as such by the district liaison
- Migrant youth certified by local officials
- Runaway youth certified by local officials
- Head Start students and
- Foster children, certified based on documentation from the foster child case worker.