

CEP

Community Eligibility Provision



The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) enables high-needs schools and districts with high concentrations of low-income students to offer free meals to all students and eliminates the need for household school meal applications.

“The money’s here. I’m at a position now where we’re getting new equipment. ... we are rebuilding the food service program.”

*—Sharon Gardner, Food Service Director,
Hempstead Union Free School District*



Participation

Any district, group of schools in a district, or individual school with 40% or more “identified students”—children eligible for free school meals who are identified by means other than an individual household application—can participate.

Identified students include:

- Children who are directly certified for free school meals because their household participates in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), and in certain instances, Medicaid.
- Children who are certified for free school meals without an application because they are homeless or a runaway, migrant, in foster care, or participating in Head Start.

How CEP works

Schools do not process school meal applications, track meals by fee category (i.e. free, reduced-price, paid) or collect fees; they simply count the total number of meals served.

Reimbursement for meals is calculated using an Identified Student Percentage (ISP). The ISP is determined by the number of students certified for free school meals by means other than a household application, compared to the total school district’s/group of schools’/individual school’s enrollment as of April 1st.

The percentage of meals reimbursed at the free rate is determined by multiplying the ISP by 1.6. For example, a school with 50 percent identified students would be reimbursed at the free rate for 80 percent of the breakfasts and lunches served, and at the paid rate for the remaining 20 percent.

“Being a CEP school, and the kids eating free, we get more money for the food than we would if they paid, which means we can give them better food.”

—Sharon Gardner, Food Service Director, Hempstead UFSD



“Before CEP, we were struggling getting lunch forms back from families that we knew had to fill [them] out. I felt that impacted our numbers. I don’t think it reflected our true poverty level. ... So I’m very grateful and appreciative of what we have in place now.”

—Dr. Roberto Padilla, Superintendent,
Newburgh Enlarged City School District

Benefits of CEP

Less administrative work

Schools no longer need to collect and verify school meal applications, handle meal payments or track down uncollected fees, so fewer staff members are needed.

Increases participation

In a U.S. Department of Agriculture evaluation of school districts participating in the seven pilot states in the 2012-13 school year, CEP boosted school meal participation; school breakfast participation increased by 9.4 percent and school lunch participation increased by 5.2 percent.

Facilitates implementation of alternative breakfast models

When schools only need to do a “head count” of how many kids eat and no longer need to collect fees or count each meal served by fee category, it simplifies the implementation of breakfast in the classroom and “grab and go” service models that can further boost participation.

Improved financial viability of school meal programs

When more students participate in school meals, economy of scale allows the program to be more cost effective and generate more revenue, which can be used to pay staff, buy equipment, and/or improve the quality of the food served.

Eliminates unpaid meal balances

Schools no longer have to foot the bill for unpaid meal fees, or try to collect them from families. Removing this dynamic between schools and families allows school nutrition staff to focus on preparing and serving healthy meals and eliminates a significant financial burden for school districts and families.



Applying for CEP

Applications for the 2017-2018 school year must be submitted to the New York State Education Department, Child Nutrition Program Administration, by **June 30, 2017**.

Eligibility is based on the ISP calculated using April 1, 2017 enrollment and 2016-2017 direct certification data (including Direct Certification Matching Process files from August, October, February, and April).

The application and instructions can be found at:

www.cn.nysed.gov/content/2017-18-cep-application-and-instructions-due-6302017

How Hunger Solutions New York can help

Hunger Solutions New York works with school and government leaders, and organizations statewide to help expand the implementation of CEP. We work one-on-one with districts to:

- Help administrators understand CEP eligibility and the application process
- Provide strategies to improve local direct certification processes to maximize CEP reimbursement
- Explain how CEP implementation and reimbursement works
- Connect schools considering CEP implementation with CEP schools with similar demographics, to help administrators better understand how CEP finances work
- Connect schools with community partners and programs to maximize the impact of CEP

Contact Jessica Pino-Goodspeed, Child Nutrition Specialist, at Jessica.PinoGoodspeed@HungerSolutionsNY.org for more information.



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