Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Election for School Year 2025-2026

NCDPI
Office of School Nutrition

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Acronyms

- CEP- Community Eligibility Provision
- ISP- Identified Student Percentage
- DC- Direct Certification
- SNAP- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- TANF- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- FDPIR- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
- SNTS- School Nutrition Technology System

- POS- Point of Sale
- SIS- Students Information System
- LEA- Local Education Agency
- RCCI- Residential Childcare Institution
- NCDPI- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
- SFA- School Food Authority
- SN- School Nutrition
- OSN- Office of School Nutrition
- SY- School Year

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Agenda

- Overview of CEP
- Identifying Students
- Calculating ISP
- Source Documentation
- Notifying State Agency
- Evaluating CEP
- Operating as CEP
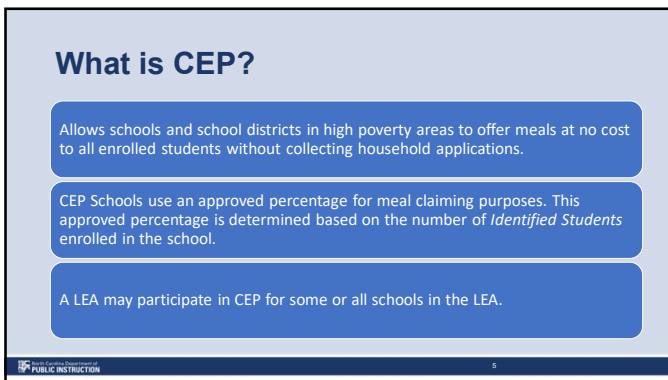- Election Deadlines for 25-26 SY

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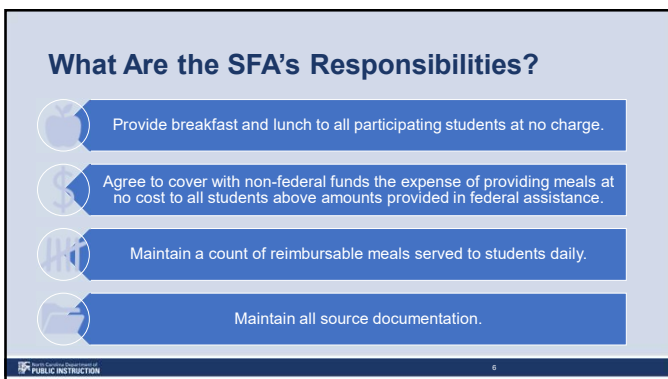PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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Overview of CEP

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What is CEP?

Allows schools and school districts in high poverty areas to offer meals at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications.

CEP Schools use an approved percentage for meal claiming purposes. This approved percentage is determined based on the number of *Identified Students* enrolled in the school.

A LEA may participate in CEP for some or all schools in the LEA.

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What Are the SFA's Responsibilities?

Provide breakfast and lunch to all participating students at no charge.

Agree to cover with non-federal funds the expense of providing meals at no cost to all students above amounts provided in federal assistance.

Maintain a count of reimbursable meals served to students daily.

Maintain all source documentation.

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What Are the SFA's Responsibilities?

To not collect free and reduced priced household meal application forms for households in participating schools during the period of participation in CEP.

Provide Direct Certification notice and CEP participation to households.

To not be a residential childcare institution (RCCI) as that term is set forth in the definition of School in 7CFR 210.2.

Comply with all program requirements

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What Are the Benefits of CEP?

Students	Parents	Schools
• Breakfast and lunch offered daily to all students • No meal charges' • Meals are healthy and nutritious • Students are ready to learn • Reduces social stigma	• No household meal applications • No payments for student meals	• Decreases administrative burdens • Streamlines meal service • Eases implementation of alternative breakfast models

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What Are the Eligibility Requirements?

Have a minimum level *Identified Student Percentage* (25%) as of April 1 in the year prior to implementing CEP.

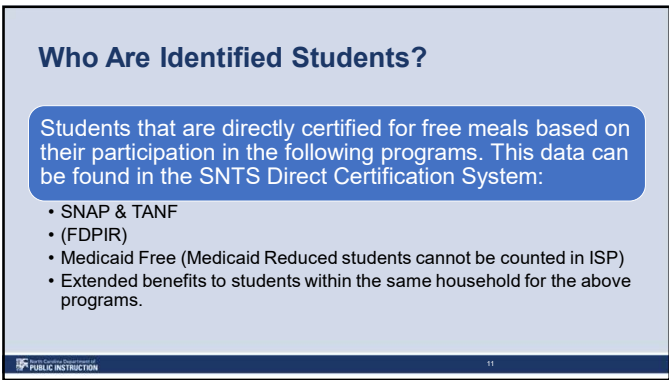*ISP* is equal to the number of *Identified Students* divided by total enrollment

All ISP data is as of April 1.

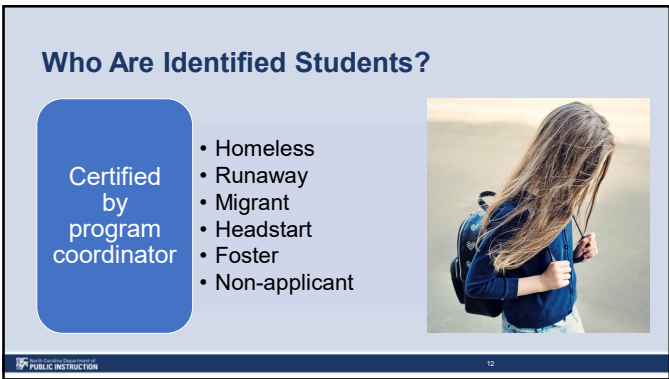The *ISP* is then multiplied by the ISP multiplier (1.6).

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Identifying Students

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Who Are Identified Students?

Students that are directly certified for free meals based on their participation in the following programs. This data can be found in the SNTS Direct Certification System:

- SNAP & TANF
- (FDPIR)
- Medicaid Free (Medicaid Reduced students cannot be counted in ISP)
- Extended benefits to students within the same household for the above programs.

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Who Are Identified Students?

Certified by program coordinator

- Homeless
- Runaway
- Migrant
- Headstart
- Foster
- Non-applicant

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Access the Direct Certification Feature

1. Access SNTS by typing the URL into the address line of the web browser.
2. Enter the assigned user ID.
3. Enter the password.
4. Select Login.
5. The Programs page is displayed. An individual's access to specific modules is based on their assigned security rights. Select the **School Nutrition Programs** tile.
6. The School Nutrition Programs landing page will display. Select the **Applications** link from the header menu.
7. The Applications menu will display. Select the **Direct Certification** menu item.

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Access the Direct Certification Feature

8. The Direct Certification landing page will display. From here, the SFA can:
   a) Identify the program year in which the direct certification tasks will be performed.
   b) Add individual student records via the Add Individual Student button.
   c) Upload a student enrollment file via the Student File Upload button.
   d) Perform direct verification via the Direct Verification button.
   e) View the Complete Direct Certification List.
   f) Access the Additional Possible Matches List.
   g) Access the Extended Eligibility Matches List.

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Access the Direct Certification Feature

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Other Categorical Students

Extended benefits are for students that were not counted in the DC system but qualify as Other Categorical due to living in a household where another student received SNAP, TANF, FDPIR; or they are considered migrant, homeless, foster, runaway, or non-applicant.

Student(s) can only be counted once and cannot be counted in multiple categories.

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Calculating ISP

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Who Are Enrolled Students?

Students actively enrolled in a participating site per the student information system (e.g., PowerSchools, Infinite Campus).

Must be enrolled in the school* applying for CEP that has access to at least one USDA funded SNP meal service (breakfast and/or lunch) at the school.

Students who are not enrolled, do not attend a brick-and-mortar school and do not have access to either breakfast or lunch daily are not counted in the enrollment numbers for the CEP application.

Enrolled Pre-K students may be included if they are offered at least one USDA funded SNP Meal Service (breakfast and/or lunch).

School: An educational unit of high school grade or under, recognized as part of the educational system in the State and operating under public or nonprofit private ownership in a single building or complex of buildings; 7CFR 210.2.

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Calculating ISP

$$ISP = \frac{\#\ Identified\ Students}{\#\ Enrolled\ Students} \times 100$$

	Identified Students		Enrolled Students		Total	Multiply x 100		ISP
Example	230	÷	420	=	0.5476	100	=	54.76

- ISP Calculations are carried to the second decimal place.
- SFAs cannot round up to meet the minimum ISP.
- An ISP of 24.98% does not meet the minimum threshold of 25% to elect CEP.

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Increasing ISP

Perform direct certification matches as often as possible

Extend eligibility to students living in the same household with other students who are directly certified.

Connect with school support staff to identify any students who are newly homeless or have entered foster care.

Connect with local organizations that do SNAP outreach to families.

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Source Documentation

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Source Documentation

- USDA requires State Agencies to ensure the accuracy of SFAs Identified Student Percentages and that all participation requirements are met.

- This process will require School Nutrition Consultants to review all source documentation and confirm the ISP before claiming for reimbursement can begin for the 25-26 SY.

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Student Enrollment

Confirm that the Student Information System (PowerSchool or Infinite Campus) enrollment summary matches the POS enrollment summary for **each individual school** as of April 1.
- *A list of students in each site is not needed, just the summary.*

Print or save a copy of enrollment summary for each individual school from SIS and the POS.

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Direct Certification

Direct Certification from SNTS for SFAs with POS

- Import the SNTS Direct Certification into the POS following the software's instruction:
  - o Save DC file that was imported.
  - *If there are students listed under an invalid school code, double check with your Student Information System Administrator. These usually are students that receive special services but are not counted in enrollment/membership as they don't have access to meal services.*

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Direct Certification

Direct Certification from SNTS for SFAs with POS

- Report for each School Site must have the following information:
  - o Student ID Number
  - o Last Name
  - o First Name
  - o School Code
  - o Grade
  - o DC Type (Medicaid Reduced will need to be removed.)

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Direct Certification

Direct Certification from SNTS for SFAs without POS

- Download the SNTS Direct Certification (DC) list.
- Remove "transfer" students and "Medicaid Reduced" from list
  - o *Best practice: cut & paste information and place on new tab*
- Remove any duplicate students that may be listed.
- Arrange by School Code.
- Save file to a secure location.

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Extended Benefits

Extended benefits are for students that were not counted in the DC system but qualify as Other Categorical due to living in a household where another student received SNAP, TANF, FDPIR; or they are considered migrant, homeless, foster, or runaway.

- **Student(s) can only be counted once and cannot be counted in multiple categories.**

Double check for duplicates in any category. If a student is counted in Direct Certification and from other categorical, include the student count in the Direct Certification column.

- *Example: If a student is listed as a foster student and is also listed as a direct certification student, the student can only be counted once. Remove the student from the foster list as they have been counted in the DC list.*

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Extended Benefits

Students that live in the same household with another student who is directly certified to receive **SNAP, TANF, FDPIR** must have documentation that includes:

- The name of the student who is eligible for extended benefits, name of qualifying student directly certified or categorically eligible based on approved application.
- Date which the SFA extended benefits to student.
- Documentation for the extended benefits student (name of household contact, telephone number for household).
- Name of SFA staff making contact.

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Extended Benefits

Runaway	**Migrant**
• students that have extended benefits must have documentation with signature from the Local Education Agency liaison or designated official from Runaway services verifying student(s) name and effective dates.	• students that have extended benefits must have documentation with signature from the Local Education Agency liaison or designated official from Migrant Services verifying student(s) name and effective dates; or, a letter from Migrant Education Programs official or LEA liaison confirming that the student currently meets the definition of migrant for non-automated local level data sharing.

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Extended Benefits

Homeless	**Foster**	**Head Start** or State funded pre-kindergarten	**Non-applicant**
• students that are extended benefits must have documentation with signature from the Local Education Agency liaison, or designated official from Homeless Services verifying student(s) name and effective date; or documentation verifying the student participates under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act.	• students that are extended benefits must have a letter, document, or list of children from the State, local welfare agency or Court confirming the student's status as a foster child. • **HOUSEHOLD APPLICATIONS STATING FOSTER CANNOT BE COUNTED.**	• must have a list of students enrolled or statement of student enrolled.	• students approved by local education officials, such as a principal, based on available information.

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Common Misunderstandings about Identified Students

- Identified Students numbers are **NOT** the same as free and reduced eligibility numbers.
- Identified Students are **NOT** those that were certified for free or reduced meals based on data submitted on household meal applications.
- Identified Students numbers do **NOT** include:
  - SNAP/TANF number on household meal application
  - Foster child marked on household meal application
  - Homeless, Migrant, Runaway marked on household meal application without signature from the program coordinator
  - Submission of income-based household meal application
  - DC or extension of benefits for income eligible Medicaid Reduced

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Notifying State Agency

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CEP Site Data Worksheet

Direct Certification Run Date															
LEA Name		LEA Code													
				Other Identified Student Categories							Total Identified Students	Enrollment (only include students who have access to at least one meal per day)	% Identified Students	% of Meals claimed Free
School Code	School Name (List each school site individually)	DC FNS/TANF/FDPIR	DC Medicaid Free	Homeless	Runaway	Migrant	Foster	Head Start	Even Start	Non-Applicant	Other Total				
														#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
														#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
														#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
														#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
														#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
														#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
	SFA Totals													#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!

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Completing the CEP Site List in SNTS

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Completing the CEP Site List in SNTS

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Evaluating CEP

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Calculating Claim Reimbursement

$$ISP \times 1.6 = Claiming\ Percentage$$

ISP x Multiplier = % of meals claimed at free rate
Remaining meals claimed at paid rate

The ISP multiplier is 1.6 .
o *The USDA regulates the ISP multiplier. On average, for every 10 identified students, 6 more students would have been certified if school meal applications were collected.*

Example:
50% (ISP) x 1.6 (multiplier) = 80%
80% of meals claimed will be at the free rate
20% of meals claimed will be at the paid rate

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Determining Claim Percentages

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Reimbursement for a CEP group in the **First Year** under CEP is based on the percentage of Identified Students as of April 1 of the school year prior to the first year of electing benefits.
• 25-26 SY will be based on April 1, 2025, Identified Students and enrollment.

2
ISP calculations are carried to the second decimal place to ensure the accuracy of federal reimbursements.

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Determining Claim Percentages

The percentage of Identified Students Percentage is multiplied by ISP multiplier 1.6 to determine the total percentage of meals reimbursed at the Federal FREE reimbursement rate.
   Carry the calculation to a minimum of two (2) decimal places

• Will not exceed being reimbursed at 100%.

• The remaining percentage of meals, equaling up to 100 percent, is reimbursed at the Federal PAID reimbursement rate.

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Determining Claim Percentages

The claiming percentage is applied to the total number of meals served to determine the reimbursement amount.

The claiming percentage established for a school in the First Year of CEP is guaranteed for a period of four consecutive school years.

If the ISP increases for a site or group for the data pulled on April 1 for the next school year, an SFA can reapply with new claiming percentages, extending the CEP approval for an additional four (4) years.

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Examples

ISP	ISP Multiplier	Free	Paid
25%		40%	60%
45%		72%	28%
50%	x 1.6	80%	20%
55%		88%	12%
60%		96%	4%
65%		100%	0%

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CEP Site Data Worksheet: EXAMPLE

				Other Identified Student Categories									Total Identified Students	Enrollment (only include students who have access to at least one meal per day)	% Identified Students	% of Meals claimed Free
Direct Certification Run Date	4/1/25															
LEA Name	ABC School District	LEA Code	123													
School Code	School Name *(List each school site individually)*	DC FNS/TANF/FDPIR	DC Medicaid Free	Homeless	Runaway	Migrant	Foster	Head Start	Even Start	Non-Applicant	Other Total					
	A	200										200	266	75.19%	120.30%
	B	298										298	559	53.31%	85.30%
	C	99		1							1	100	668	14.97%	23.95%
	D	98			1	1					2	100	111	90.09%	144.14%
														#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
														#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
	SFA Totals	695									3	698	1604	43.52%	69.363%

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School Detail for Grouping Examples

School	ISP	X 1.6=%
School A	75.19%	120.30%
School B	53.31%	85.30%
School C	14.97%	23.95%
School D	90.09%	144.14%

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School Detail for Grouping Examples

Option 1	Group Sites A/C/D	Site B		Option 2	Group Sites A/B/D	Site C
% of Meals Claimed at Free Rate	61.24%	85.30%		% of Meals Claimed at Free Rate	100%	Doesn't participate

Option 3	District Wide	
% of Meals Claimed at Free Rate	69.63%	

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Deciding the Best Option

Individual School Site	Groups of School Sites	District wide
• Site data used to determine claiming percentage.	• Schools grouped to maximize claiming percentage. • No limit to the number of groups or individual sites. • Same site cannot be used more than once.	• All sites in the district are grouped together. • All sites will have the same claiming percentage. • In some instances, even when sites are grouped for CEP claiming percentages, the site level data is used for USDA and other programs.

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Traditional Vs CEP Claiming

CEP Reimbursable Worksheet

Meals Count USDA Community Eligibility Provision CEP Grouping Calculator and Optimization Free Tool

No Kid Hungry's CEP Calculator | No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices

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Title I

- CEP could possibly increase funding.
- District Wide CEP, the LEA would use Direct Certification data for Title 1 reporting.
- If a mixture of income based and CEP data, the LEA would use Direct Certification data for all schools or could use DC data for CEP schools and household applications. information for non-CEP schools
- Contact Title 1 Coordinator for assistance.

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E-Rate

- CEP will have a positive impact on E-Rate.
  - o The E-Rate discount isn't a straight correlation of % of students on NSLP to the E-Rate discount.
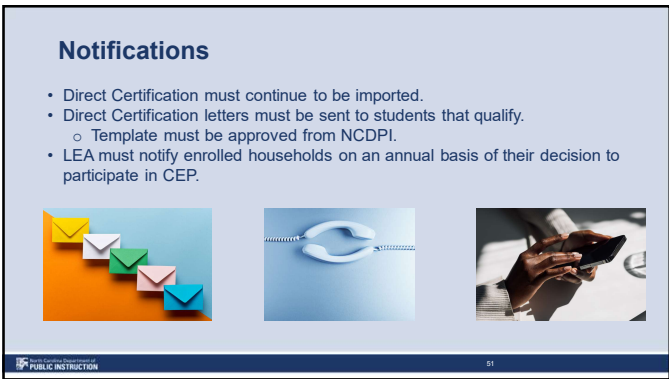
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Operating as CEP

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CEP Schedule

Action		Form Name
View | Revise	✔	SFA Application
View | Admin | Revise	✔	Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Schedule
Add		Fresh Fruit And Vegetable Sponsor Application
Details	✔	Meal Pattern Compliance Dashboard
Details	✔	Checklist Summary (8)

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Notifications

- Direct Certification must continue to be imported.
- Direct Certification letters must be sent to students that qualify.
  - Template must be approved from NCDPI.
- LEA must notify enrolled households on an annual basis of their decision to participate in CEP.

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Alternate Income Forms

- Any LEA seeking to obtain household information must develop, conduct, and fund this effort entirely separate from School Nutrition.
- School Nutrition cannot be involved in collecting the information; or
  - The LEA would have to pay School Nutrition for this service.

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CEP Meal Counting & Claiming

CEP schools must obtain an accurate count of daily reimbursable student breakfast and lunch meals, to submit claims for reimbursement.

Must use a Point of Sale or other system to associate meal with student. No tallies are to be used. A meal must be attached to a student.

CEP meals are for students only.

Must continue to conduct daily edit checks.

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CEP Meal Counting & Claiming

- Meal claims must be in whole numbers. When free or paid meal calculations result in partial meals, use standard rounding procedures.

- For any claim, if the total of number meals claimed for free/paid does not equal the total number of meals served, the paid category must be adjusted so that all served meals are claimed.

Example:
800 meals at 86.15%
800 x 86.15%= 689.2 (round down to 689)

800-689= 111
689 Free & 111 Paid

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A La Carte Sales

- CEP allows each student to have one (1) reimbursable breakfast and one (1) reimbursable lunch at school each day.

- If students wish to purchase a la carte items, those prices are set by the local school district.

- If students are offered a reimbursable meal and decline the meal and only want the milk, there is no federal reimbursement for the milk only.

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CEP & Verification

The verification process is **NOT** completed by a school that is approved as CEP, as the school did not collect and process any household eligibility applications for meal benefits.

Verification Summary Report must still be completed.

If the district has a combination of schools that are CEP approved and non-cep approved schools, the verification process is conducted by the district for those Non- CEP sites.

- Data will be reported by the district on the verification summary report.

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Managing CEP: Year 2-4

Continue to evaluate ISP

If the ISP increases, USDA allows the SFA to withdraw the current group and re-establish the 4-year cycle with the new claiming percentage

If the numbers decrease, no action is needed. The school remains at the initial base year claiming percentage

The SFA will want to monitor if the ISP decrease below 25% as the schools may no longer qualify for CEP at the end of the 4-year cycle

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CEP Grace Year

If after the 4-year CEP cycle, a CEP group that has an ISP of 15% but less than 25%, the CEP group may continue to participate in CEP for one grace year (fifth year).

Reimbursement for CEP in a grace year is based on the April 1 data in year 4 of the current 4-year cycle.

- This impacts a small number of CEP approved sponsors.
- More guidance is in the **USDA CEP Planning and Implementation** guide.

This CEP grace year application is completed in SNTS.

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Election Deadlines for 25-26 SY

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Deadlines	Date	Activity
	April 1st	SFAs pull ISP data reflective of April 1st date
	April 8th	Deadline to enter information into SNTS
	April 15th	State Agency notifies LEAs of district wide eligibility status and provides guidance and information
	May 1st	State Agency to post ISP data on website and submit to Regional Office
	June 30th	Last day to notify State Agency of their intent to participate in CEP

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Resources

USDA's CEP Resource Center:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/community-eligibility-provision-resource-center

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Planning & Implementation Guide:
CEP Planning and Implementation Guidance | Food and Nutrition Service

NCDPI School Nutrition:
https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/school-nutrition/information-resources-subject/determining-household-eligibility-school-meals/community-eligibility-provision-cep

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Additional Resources

FRAC:
Home - Food Research & Action Center

No Kid Hungry:
Community Eligibility Provision | No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices

Meals Count:
Meals Count USDA Community Eligibility Provision CEP Grouping Calculator and Optimization Free Tool

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Questions?

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In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-ComplaintForm-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. 2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. 3. email: program.intake@usda.gov
4. This institution is an equal opportunity provider

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