



WISCONSIN SCHOOL NUTRITION IN A NUTSHELL

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Understanding the Option

Section 104 Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act

CEP is a four-year reimbursement option for eligible local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools participating in both the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) that wish to offer free school meals to all children in high-poverty schools without collecting household meal applications.

Benefits

- Lunch and breakfast are served free to all students in participating schools
- No meal applications for free or reduced-price meal benefits collected from households¹
- Verification of meal applications is not required, but the Verification Collection Report (VCR) is required
- Paid Lunch Equity is not required for CEP schools
- Meal participation rates generally increase, especially at breakfast
- Eliminates meal fees, so staff no longer need to collect unpaid meal fees from households

Considerations

- LEA's level of participation (district-wide, group, or single site)
- LEA's anticipated level of federal reimbursement
 - Note: the reduced-price category is eliminated in CEP
- LEA's non-federal resources available to cover operating costs above federal reimbursement
 - Use the [USDA Monthly Federal Reimbursement Estimator](#) to project the financial impact
- Options for collecting the economically disadvantaged data for other programs [Title I, SAGE (AGR), etc.]
 - Contact the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) [Title I](#) and [SAGE \(AGR\)](#) departments to discuss options for data reporting
- Review the annual CEP LEA and School Notification Report, posted on the CEP website, to evaluate if CEP may be a good fit

Who is eligible to participate?

- Schools that participate both the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs

- Individual schools, groups of schools, or districts with an identified student percentage (ISP) of at least 40%. The ISP is established using enrollment data from April 1 of the school year prior to CEP implementation.

Who is considered enrolled as of April 1?

Enrolled students attend schools applying for CEP and have access to at least one meal service daily. Half-day students who have access to either breakfast and/or lunch are included in total enrollment.

Who is an identified student?

Students directly certified for free meals without the use of a meal application. Identified students may be:

- Matched electronically via Direct Certification (DC) for free meals with any of the following codes:
 - S = Food Share/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - T = W-2 Cash Benefits
 - O = Food Share/SNAP and W-2
 - E = Foster
 - G = Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
 - M = Medicaid
- Certified for free meals via extension of benefits from another child in the household who is matched electronically via DC with an S, T, M, G, or O code. The E code does not extend to other children in the household. The Z code does not apply because it certifies students for reduced-price meals, not free meals.
- Categorically eligible for free meals without a meal application, which includes:
 - Children designated as homeless, migrant, or runaway
 - Foster children certified through means other than an application
 - Children enrolled in Head Start or Even Start programs
 - Children from households that received FDPIR benefits who are certified via the letter method

How do I determine if the ISP is above 40%?

To calculate the ISP, divide the number of identified students as of April 1 by the number of enrolled students as of April 1, and then multiply by 100. The ISP **may not** be rounded up to qualify.

How are free and paid claiming percentages determined for federal reimbursement?

- The ISP is used to establish free and paid claiming percentages. In CEP there is no reduced-price category. The ISP is multiplied by 1.6 to determine the percentage of meals that will be reimbursed at the free rate. The remaining meals, up to 100%, are reimbursed at the paid rate.

- The same claiming percentages are used for breakfast and lunch and are valid for four years.²
- If the school, group of schools, or district has an ISP of 62.50% or higher, 100% of meals served will be reimbursed at the free rate and 0% at the paid rate.
 - Example:
 - $125 \text{ identified students} / 200 \text{ enrolled students} = 0.625 \text{ ISP}$
 - $0.625 \times 100 = 62.50\%$
 - $62.50\% \times 1.6 = 100.00\% \text{ free claiming percentage}$

What are the annual reporting requirements?

For an overview of the annual reporting requirements, see the most current [DPI CEP Calendar of Requirements](#).

How does my LEA or school apply for CEP?

CEP application information is available on the DPI CEP website under the heading “How to Apply.” Interested agencies will need to establish data as of April 1 of the year prior to starting CEP. There is a signed agreement form, an electronic student roster, and an eligibility worksheet to complete. New CEP applications for the upcoming school year are accepted after May 1 and are due by June 30.

DPI Resources

- [DPI School Nutrition Team CEP Website](#)
- [CEP Planning and Implementation Guidance](#)
- [USDA FNS Updated Q&As](#)
- [USDA CEP Website](#)

¹Collection of student-level income data for outside programs requires the use of either the Alternate Household Income Form or the Modified USDA Free and Reduced-Price Meal Application. Processing costs for applications that contain only CEP students cannot be paid for using the non-profit food service account.

²Annually, agencies must report any significant changes in their student population that may require a recalculation. Agencies may also apply to increase their ISP and claiming percentages and restart their cycle.