

# Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a federal reimbursement option for schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) serving high-need communities. It gives schools the ability to offer all students meals free of charge. It was permanently authorized nationwide by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

## ELIGIBILITY

A school, group of schools, or school district can elect to adopt CEP if they have at least 25% of enrolled students who are:

- participating in [certain public benefit programs](#), such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
- automatically eligible for free school meals based on their status as homeless, migrant, foster, or runaway;
- enrolled in Head Start.

This percentage, known as Identified Student Percentage (ISP), is determined via a data matching process called direct certification and decides the federal per-meal reimbursement rate CEP schools receive.

$$\text{ISP} = \frac{\text{\# of identified students}}{\text{total student enrollment}} \times 100$$

## MEAL REIMBURSEMENT

CEP schools are reimbursed with either [the federal free claiming rate or the paid claiming rate](#). No meals are reimbursed at the reduced-price claiming rate. The ISP is multiplied by 1.6 to determine the percentage of meals reimbursed at the free rate, while all remaining meals are reimbursed at the paid rate. CEP runs on a four-year cycle. This chart shows how different ISPs result in different per-meal reimbursements.

School	ISP	1.6 Multiplier	% of meals reimbursed at FREE Rate	% of meals reimbursed at PAID Rate
School A	44%	44 x 1.6 = 70.4	70.4%	29.6%
School B	62%	62 x 1.6 = 99.2	99.2%	0.8%

## BENEFITS

- Increases equity by removing the financial barrier of school meals for families.
- Reduces administrative burden because household applications are not necessary.
- Eliminates barriers families may face in completing household applications, such as language or literacy barriers or fear related to immigration status.
- Eradicates school meal debt by ensuring all students receive meals at no charge.
- Could be a revenue generator for school nutrition budgets (ISP dependent) via the federal free per-meal reimbursement.
- Overrides the need for counting/claiming, thereby simplifying meals in the classroom.
- Does **not** negatively impact the amount of federal Title I education funds a district receives.

For more information and resources about CEP, visit the [Center for Best Practices website](#).

