Community Eligibility Basics:

How CEP can Transform Your Schools

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Goals for Webinar

- CEP Overview
- Success with CEP
- Tools and Resources
- Q+A

CEP Fundamentals

What is CEP, CEP benefits, and eligibility

What is the Community Eligibility Provision?

- The Community Eligibility Provision, or **CEP** allows schools with a high percentage of needy children to serve free meals to all enrolled students for a period of up to **four** consecutive school years
- Individual schools, groups of schools, or entire school districts may elect CEP, provided they meet the participation requirements

Combat Child Hunger in Your Community

- CEP simplifies the process by which low income children access healthy school meals
- Nearly 16 million American children live in households that struggle to put food on the table; CEP can extend a vital lifeline to members of your school community who are in need

What Makes CEP Different?

- Traditional school meal programs require schools to determine children's eligibility for free or reduced price school meals on an individual basis
- CEP does not require this extensive paperwork burden and eliminates the need to collect money from students
- CEP instead relies on data matching from the rolls of other assistance programs, like the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* (SNAP) and *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families* (TANF)

CEP Benefits

Students:

- Enjoy free, healthy meals at school
- With universal meal service, there is no stigma attached to a free meal

Parents:

- Do not have to fill out individual household applications
- Do not have to worry about refilling meal accounts, or whether their child has an opportunity to eat at school

Schools:

- Reduces paperwork and administrative costs
- Streamlines meal service operation
- Students spend less time waiting in lines and more time eating; they are less likely to discard food and come to class better nourished and ready to learn

Eligibility

1. Schools, groups of schools, or school districts must have an ***identified student percentage*** (ISP) of at least 40% as of April 1st of the school year prior to implementing CEP

2. Participate in NSLP and SBP

3. Has a record of administering the Programs in accordance with regulations

How is the Identified Student Percentage (ISP) calculated?

$$\textbf{Identified Student \% =} \frac{\text{\# of Identified Students}}{\text{Total \# of enrolled students}} \times 100$$

- The identified student percentage may be determined by:
  - an individual participating school
  - a group of participating schools in the LEA
  - entire LEA if all schools participate

Who are the Identified Students?

- CEP eligibility is based on the percentage of ***identified students*** who are *enrolled*

- ***Identified Students*** are low income children who are certified for free school meals without the use of a household application
  - Students certified based on categorical eligibility (e.g. directly certified with SNAP, TANF, FDPIR, or based on status as migrant youth, homeless, foster child, Head Start)

Who are the enrolled students?

- *Enrolled Students:* students who are enrolled in and attending schools participating in the community eligibility provision and who have access to at least one meal service daily

- Students who do **not** have access to either breakfast or lunch due to the times they are attending school are **not** included in the count of enrolled students.

How are meals claimed?

- ISP is multiplied by a factor of **1.6** to determine the % of total meals served that will be reimbursed at the Federal **FREE** rate
  - 1.6 multiplier approximates free and reduced % if applications were still collected
- The remaining % of total meals is reimbursed at the Federal **PAID** rate
- If ISP $\geq$ 62.5, all meals reimbursed at **FREE** rate (62.5 x 1.6 = 100)

When do LEAs have to cover operating costs?

- When the level of Federal reimbursement received under CEP is less than the cost of providing all students free meals
- Same as in Provision 2/3 schools
- Same as standard operating procedures when the level of Federal reimbursement is less than the cost of providing meals

How are schools grouped?

- Schools can be eligible to participate in CEP individually, in a group, or district-wide
- When schools are grouped, ISP is calculated using the identified student and enrollment totals for all schools in the group
- Schools that would not be eligible to participate in CEP individually may participate as part of a group, provided that the group's ISP is still at least 40%
- LEAs can enroll multiple groups in CEP

Grouping Example

- In this example, three schools are grouped together by their LEA:

	Identified students	Enrollment	ISP
School 1	60	120	50%
School 2	38	100	38%
School 3	150	200	75%
Group of schools	248	420	59%

$$\frac{\text{Total identified students for group (248)}}{\text{Total enrollment for group (420)}}$$

CEP Enrollment

Annual promotion and outreach, important dates

Important Dates

April 1st

- The date on which the identified student percentage must be established for determining the eligibility and the claiming percentages to be used.

April 15th

- State agencies notify LEAs of districtwide eligibility status and provide guidance and information.
- School level data is collected

May 1st

- State agencies post the LEA districtwide and school level lists on website and send the link to FNS

June 30th

- Interested and eligible LEAs must notify their State agency of their intent to participate in CEP.

Figure out the Numbers!

Election level flexibilities

- Individual school
  - Allows districts to try out CEP
- Grouping
  - Provides flexibility to add in schools to avoid parent confusion
  - Brings schools with lower ISPs into CEP
- Districtwide
  - Operationally efficient
  - Easier for parent acceptability

Financial Viability

- Ensuring financial viability is key when electing CEP
- An evaluation study of pilot States found that the average identified student percentage was around **55% or higher**
- USDA Estimator Tool
  http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/community-eligibility-provision

Maximize Identified Student Percentages

- Ensure that direct certification data is coming from all possible sources.
  - SNAP, TANF, and FDPIR participation records
  - Homeless, migrant, or runaway youths certified through documentation provided by applicable program liaisons
  - Participation rolls for Head Start, and pre-K Even Start
  - Foster children certified through means other than an application
  - Students certified through the SNAP letter method

How do we Enroll in CEP?

1

- Interested schools and districts must notify their State agency by June 30th that they would like to participate
- Documentation is submitted to State agency indicating eligibility

2

- The State agency will review the documentation to ensure the school/district:
  - Meets the 40% ISP requirement
  - Participates in both the NSLP and SBP
  - Has a record of administering the meal program in accordance with program regulations

3

- Once the school/district is approved, the State agency will facilitate training and technical assistance

Can we stop CEP?

- LEAs or school(s) may return to standard counting and claiming any time during the school year

- State agencies must provide schools or LEAs dropping out in the middle of a school year at least 30 days to transition back to standard counting and claiming

Changes During the 4-Year Cycle

- A new identified student percentage may be established each year (April 1)
- During the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years, the LEA/school may select the higher of the identified student percentage from:
  - the year directly prior; OR
  - the year prior to the first year of operating CEP
- LEAs/schools in year 4 with an identified student percentage of less than 40% but more than 30% may elect for an additional year (a grace year)

Federal, State & Local Education Funding

Title I, E-Rate discounts, impact on other programs

What about other Federal Child Nutrition programs?

- The CEP free claiming percentage serves as a proxy for free and reduced price certifications (ISP X 1.6)
- May be used when determining area eligibility for Child Nutrition Programs

Title I

- U.S. Department of Education guidance on how LEAs can successfully implement Title I requirements while operating CEP
- FNS policy memo SP-19-2014, "*Community Eligibility Provision: Department of Education Title I Guidance*" and may be accessed at http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP19-2014os.pdf
- There are many options potentially available to LEAs for meeting Title I data requirements! Determine which solutions are available and/or preferred in your State

E-Rate Discounts

- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has also released guidance on Federal Funding for the E-Rate program, available here: http://www.fcc.gov/document/universal-service-administrative-company-3

- SY 2014-15: CEP schools may use the NSLP eligibility data that they previously submitted for the most recent funding year in which they did not participate in CEP

- SY 2015-16: CEP schools may use claiming percentage (ISP x 1.6)

What about State and local education funding?

- **State funding:** Work with State agency to determine options; most States have resolved or are working to eliminate barriers
- **Local funding:** communicate with stakeholders; determine options

Communicate with Stakeholders

Include all stakeholders in conversations about CEP

- School administrators/board members
- School food service staff and/or food service vendors
- Title I and State Educational Agency contacts
- State nutrition contacts
- PTA representatives
- Other groups that may be impacted by CEP

Success Stories & Resources

CEP progress update, helpful CEP resources, Q&A

CEP: Tried, Tested, Already Delivering Results

States have made **tremendous progress** implementing CEP in its first year of nationwide availability. In SY 2014-2015:

Almost **14,000 schools**

Over **2,000 school districts**

Total enrollment of **6.4 million children**

Schools participating in **49 States and DC**

CEP's Success Continues to Grow

- Numerous positive success stories from State and local stakeholders
- Higher participation in school meal programs frequently reported
- CEP elections likely to increase for SY 2015-2016

Helpful CEP Resources

- Community Eligibility page on the USDA FNS website: http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/community-eligibility-provision

- **Includes:**
  - Policy guidance
  - Program requirements/information
  - Reimbursement estimator & grouping tool
  - CEP guidance from other Federal agencies

We want your feedback!

- Please keep in touch to share your best practices, challenges, and concerns

Questions?

Future CEP Webinars: Save the Dates

- Tuesday, Feb. 24, 1-2:30 pm EST
  Direct Certification & Reporting for State Agencies

- Wednesday, Mar. 4, 1-2 pm EST
  Publication/Notification Requirements for State Agencies

- Wednesday, Mar. 18, 1-2 pm EST
  CEP Financials for State Agencies & School Districts