

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)



History



- **Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010**
 - Provides an alternative to household applications for free and reduced price meals
 - Offers all students free meals in high poverty LEAs and schools

- **Proposed rule published in Federal Register on November 4, 2013**
 - 60 day comment period (Nov 4, 2013 to Jan 3, 2014)

Background



- **The intent of CEP is:**
 - To improve access to free school meals in eligible high poverty LEAs and schools
 - To eliminate administrative burden of collecting household applications

Implementation



- CEP was phased in over a period of three years in a limited number of States selected by FNS
- Will be available nationwide beginning July 1, 2014
- Currently LEAs and schools in Eleven States are participating:
 - District of Columbia, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, Ohio, West Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, and Massachusetts

Requirements for Participation



- Have a minimum percentage of identified students in the school year prior to implementing CEP

$$\frac{\text{Identified students}}{\text{Total enrolled students}} \times 100\% \geq 40\%$$

- Serve free lunches ***and*** breakfasts to all students
- Household applications for free and reduced price meals are not collected

Election and Eligibility



- LEAs may elect the Provision for:
 - all schools in the LEA
 - a group of schools or
 - an individual school
- Eligible school or group of schools must have an identified student percentage of at least 40 percent
- LEAs would be required to submit by June 30 to begin CEP in the SY beginning July 1
- Election is an LEA level decision but requires concurrence from the State agency

State Approval Process



- The State agency would be required to confirm the LEAs eligibility to participate in CEP
- The proposed rule would require the State agency to review documentation submitted by the LEA to ensure the LEA/school(s):
 - Meets the minimum identified student percentage
 - Participates in both the NSLP ***and*** SBP
 - Is administering the meal program in accordance with program regulations

Process



- Identified student percentage multiplied by a factor of 1.6 equals the percent of total meals served that will be reimbursed at the Federal free rate
- The remaining percent of total meals served is reimbursed at the Federal paid rate
- Any meal costs in excess of the total Federal reimbursement must be covered through non-Federal sources

Procedures: General



- LEAs must notify the State no later than June 30th of the school year prior to the first year of electing CEP
- A new identified student percentage may be established each year of the four year cycle for use in the following year
- LEAs may elect to stop CEP for the next school year for one or more participating schools by notifying the State no later than June 30th of the current school year
- If an LEA or school elects to stop CEP, LEAs may restore standard meal counting and claiming at any time during the current SY or the next SY

Annual Percentage Selection



- During the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years, the LEA/school may select the higher of:
 - Identified student percentage from the immediately preceding school year; or
 - The year prior to the first year of participating in CEP (your original ISP)

Grace Year



- LEAs/schools in year 4 with an identified student percentage less than 40 percent but not less than 30 percent are permitted to elect for an additional year
- LEAs/schools that do not meet the threshold must return to normal counting and claiming procedures the following School Year

LEA Requirement: List of Schools



- By April 15th of each year, the State agency must obtain from the LEA a list of schools:
 - With an identified student percentage of at least 40 percent
 - With an identified student percentage greater than 30 percent but less than 40 percent
 - In the 4th year of electing the Provision with an identified student percentage of at least 30 percent

State Requirement: LEA Notification



- By April 15th of each year, the State must notify LEAs:
 - With an identified student percentage of at least 40 percent of their eligibility
 - With an identified student percentage greater than 30 percent but less than 40 percent of their potential future eligibility
 - Who are currently participating
 - Who are in the 4th year of electing the Provision with an identified student percentage of at least 30 percent

State Requirement: Public Notification



- By May 1, State agencies must make the list of schools readily accessible on the State agency Web site in a format prescribed by FNS.
- In lieu of having State agencies submit the list of LEAs to FNS for publication, FNS is developing a CEP Web site which would link to the applicable portion of the State agencies' Web sites that identify both the list of schools and the list of LEAs.

Benefits of Implementing CEP



- Serve free lunches and breakfasts to all students
- Reduced paper work for households and school food service because no household applications are collected and processed
- Reduced chance of overt identification and stigma

School/LEA Considerations



- Plan for issues surrounding the absence of eligibility data
- Implement the provision in a way that results in full student participation
- Participation by individual schools, groups of schools or the entire LEA
- Anticipated level of Federal reimbursement and resources to support program costs that exceed reimbursement