



NEWTRITION!

UPDATES ON NUTRITION AT YOUR SCHOOL

APRIL 2014

Community Eligibility Provision

Providing free meals to children in high poverty areas

Community eligibility, established in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 allows schools that predominantly serve low-income children to offer nutritious meals to all students at no charge. CEP was phased in over a period of three years in a limited number of states selected by Food & Nutrition Services. Beginning July 1, 2014, the Community eligibility provision will be available nationwide.



To be eligible, schools must meet a minimum level (40%) of identified students for free and reduced meals in the year prior to implementing Community eligibility provision. Identified students are students certified for free meals through meals other than individual household applications. This primarily includes students who are directly certified for free meals on the basis of their participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). It also includes homeless, runaway, Head Start, and migrant youth. It does not include students who are eligible based on submission of free and reduced price meal applications.

Community eligibility helps low-income families, high-poverty schools, and the school lunch and breakfast program by:

- Improving student access to breakfast and lunch each day at school, helping to stretch families' limited food budgets.
- Eliminates the school meal application process, freeing up time that staff can devote to other important educational functions.
- Strengthens school nutrition programs financially and enables schools to more easily implement alternate service models, such as breakfast in the classroom or grab-n-go meals.

Community eligibility has been successfully implemented by many high-poverty schools that have seized the opportunity to create hunger-free schools in low income communities. In schools that have been participating in community eligibility for two years, studies show average daily lunch participation has risen by 13% and average daily breakfast participation has increased by 25%. This is a significant accomplishment that allows student access to a healthy breakfast to start the school day ready to learn and nutritious lunches to remain focused throughout the day.

To learn more about the community eligibility provision, visit the following websites:

- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/community-eligibility-provision>
- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SP21-2014os.pdf>

If one or more of your school buildings meets the threshold for community eligibility, and you want to investigate whether it would be financially viable for your district, please contact your Regional Director of Operations.