

## **CEP (Community Eligibility Provision) Frequently Asked Questions/Toolkit for School Districts & Charters**

### **1. What is CEP?**

- An alternate 4-year reimbursement provision for eligible CEs and schools that does not require household applications in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program.
- The intent is to improve access to free school meals in eligible high-poverty LEAs and schools and to eliminate the administrative burden of collecting household applications. It allows the school to provide enrolled students meals at no cost.
- CEP determination is based on student or household participation in specific Federal assistance programs or from students/households being categorically eligible through “other sources”. These “Identified Students” make up the percentage used in the claiming process of reimbursements.
- Identified Students – Students who are directly certified for free meals without a school meal application. Students are directly certified by participating in Federal Assistance Programs, and/or by being designated as “Other Source Categorically Eligible” for free meals.

### **2. What Federal Assistance Programs are the percentages for CEP based on? What “other sources” are included in these percentages?**

- A. Federal Assistance Programs include the following:
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
  - TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)
  - FDPIR (Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations)
  - Medicaid (Free) (This is new this school year 17-18)
- B. Other Source Categorically Eligible:
- Head Start, Even Head Start
  - Foster Care
  - Homeless Program (inclusive of runaways, and families/individuals displaced by declared disasters.
  - Migrant Program

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### **3. Who may participate in CEP? What makes a school eligible for CEP?**

- CEs/Districts that can ensure that at least 40 percent of enrolled students are identified students.
- Campuses/Sites that are participating in the NSLP and School Breakfast Program.
- CEs/schools must serve both lunch and breakfasts at no charge, to all students.
- A district may participate as a group of schools, one school, or the whole district.
- The electing entity, as a whole, must meet the eligibility criteria.

### **4. What are the Benefits of CEP?**

- Free lunches and breakfasts are served to all students.
- Lessens Administrative burden - No household applications for free and reduced-price meals are collected or certified.
- Increases participation
- Simplifies Alternative Breakfast Service models such as Breakfast in the Classroom, (BIC)
- Improves Financial Viability of School Nutrition Programs
- Eliminates unpaid meal fees

### **5. What are some of the specific requirements of CEP?**

- Schools/CEs must meet the eligibility requirements.
- Schools/CEs must serve free breakfasts and lunches to all students during the 4-year cycle.
- Schools/CEs must count total breakfasts and total lunches served to students daily.
- Must agree not to collect household applications for school meal programs.
- Must determine if non-Federal funds are needed to cover costs above USDA reimbursement.
- Must notify the Public in regards to the Program through their usual channels of communication. (That meals will be available at no cost to all enrolled students.) Via student packets that are sent out in the fall of each year, posting information on the district/CE website, and/or sharing information in the student handbooks.

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### **6. How are federal reimbursements calculated and how are they counted and claimed?**

- An Identified Student Percentage is first determined.
- Identified Student Percentage – This is the percentage used for CEP that is determined by dividing the number of identified students by the number of enrolled students at a school site/CE.
- The date for determination of these “Identified Student” numbers each year is March 20<sup>th</sup>, due to the State by April 1.
- For Claiming purposes, the ISP is multiplied by a 1.6 factor, which adjusts the ISP for reduced-price meals that are not included in the ISP. (This is an approximation). This percentage is then used to claim the amount of meals to be reimbursed at the free rate. The remainder of the claim will be reimbursed at the “paid rate”.

### **7. Will the 1.6 multiplier factor change?**

Answer: It possibly could.

- There is discretion for USDA to change the multiplier to a number between 1.3 and 1.6; however, there are currently no plans to change the multiplier.
- If it is changed in the future, schools electing CEP will keep the same multiplier for their entire four-year cycle and will not have to implement changes to the multiplier until their next cycle if CEP is elected again.
- Any change of the multiplier will be communicated well in advance of implementation through a proposed rule from USDA.

### **8. How are the remaining meals that are in excess of the total federal reimbursement covered, in the CEP Program?**

- Through any Non-Federal funding process such as:
  - Any portion of State revenue matching funds that exceeds the minimum requirement.
  - Profits from a la carte sales
  - Cash donations
  - In-Kind contributions from outside sources, such as volunteer services.

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### **9. How long may a district stay on the program? Does a district have to stay on the program for the entire 4 years?**

- The allowable term is 4 years.
- No a district/school does not have to stay on the program for the entire four (4) years. A district/school may opt in and out of the program any time during the school year or may choose not to continue at the beginning of a school year.

### **10. How important is communication with the Public/Community in the implementation of CEP at the district level? How often should communication take place?**

- Extremely Important and is required. There is a media release available that must be issued each year.
- For Schools applying due to disaster related issues, recommendation is to have on-going communication throughout the school year for the 4-year process or until the Program is discontinued.

### **11. What happens at the end of the four (4) years?**

- If the CE/schools have an ISP of at least 40 percent as of April 1 in year four of their 4-year cycle, may immediately begin another 4-year CEP Cycle, upon State approval and Regional validation.
- If a CEP has an ISP of less than 40 percent but at least 30 percent as of April 1, they may continue participating in CEP for one grace year.
- If not, then the CE must elect to stop participating in CEP and restore the CE back to standard meal procedures or at any time if standard procedures better suit their program needs. The State must at all times be notified before any changes take place.

### **12. How will the PEIMS Coordinator code students as economically disadvantaged?**

- Please reference guidance from 2018-2019 Texas Education Data Standards Section 8.2.4 – PEIMS Student Category Data Submission Requirements Addendum Version 2019.2.0

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### 13. Is a CEP school required to collect the DC report monthly?

- Yes, all schools even CEP must retrieve the DC report monthly for the CEP report due annually on April 1.

### 14. Is a CEP district required to perform the verification process?

- No, a CEP district will not perform the verification process but they should complete the required sections of the verification report.

### **THINGS A DISTRICT MUST CONSIDER:**

- Financial Viability
- Implementation
- Build Relationships/Communication
- Media Publicity
- Method to code economically disadvantaged students

### **Resources:**

- [USDA CEP Estimator \(SP 15-2013 \(vs\)\)](#) To determine the reimbursement difference between NSLP and CEP.
- [USDA CEP Implementation & Guidance Manual \(September 2016\)](#)
- [SP 54-2016 CEP Guidance and Updated Q & A's \(9-9-2016\)](#)
- [SP 35-2015 Dept. of Ed. Title 1 Guidance for CEP Schools](#)
- [Community Eligibility Provision Resource Center](#)
- [Media Release for CEP Program](#) Located on page 4 of *NSLP Administration & Forms* on squaremeals.org
- [Onsite Monitoring Form for CEP](#) Located on page 4 of *NSLP Administration & Forms* on squaremeals.org
- [Daily Record/Accuclaim for CEP](#) Located on page 2 of *NSLP Administration & Forms* on squaremeals.org
- [Income Eligibility Guidelines \(IEG\)](#) Located on squaremeals.org

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