

As LEAs recover from the impact of flooding, they may be considering the option to participate in (or recertify their rate for) the Community Eligibility Program (CEP). Under the CEP, LEAs are able to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students in a single school, a group of schools, or all schools within the LEA without the burden of collecting and processing school meal applications to make individual eligibility determinations.

With more students receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Disaster SNAP) and qualifying as homeless or other indicators that directly certify students to receive free school meals, LEAs may now qualify for CEP or qualify at a higher meal reimbursement rate.

To be eligible for the CEP, an LEA, group of schools, or school must:

- Have an identified student percentage (ISP) of 40.00 percent (39.98 does not qualify) or greater who are certified for free school meals **without the use of school meal applications** and not subject to verification, such as those directly certified through the SNAP. ISP can be calculated by dividing the number of identified students by the number of enrolled students and multiplying by 100.
- Participate in both the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP); and
- Serve lunches and breakfasts at no charge to all students.

LEAs are reimbursed using a formula based on the ISP ( $ISP \times 1.6$ ), so while 40.00% is the minimum required to participate, those with at least 62.5% ISP qualify at 100% free meal reimbursement rate from USDA ( $62.5\% \times 1.6 = 100\%$ ).

LEAs can elect the CEP in 4-year cycles which essentially freezes the ISP for 4 years. Schools can stop participating in the CEP at any time, or can begin a new 4-year cycle early if the ISP increases. This means those already participating in the CEP may want to reevaluate their ISP at this time.

For additional information, please refer to the [USDA Community Eligibility Provision Guide](#).

### **MFP At Risk Funding – Something to Consider**

While the CEP program will allow for LEAs, schools, or groups of LEA schools to provide free meals to all students, this could impact MFP funding.

For schools/LEAs not participating in the CEP, students are considered at risk if they are either free/reduced lunch eligible or limited English proficient. Newly identified students will have no impact on the 2016-17 MFP allocation, since the 2016-17 at-risk allocation is frozen at the

February 1, 2016 count. However, if the February 1, 2017 count increases, future MFP allocations may be impacted.

For schools/LEAs participating in the CEP, the at-risk percentage is frozen at the rate of the school year prior to entering the CEP, meaning newly identified students in 2016-17 would not cause an increase MFP at-risk dollars.

### Next Steps

LEAs should opt into the CEP or recertify the ISP rate by Friday, October 31, 2016. Contact information is provided below.

CEP schools/LEAs may want to re-evaluate their ISP, since it may be higher this year than when the district first chose CEP.

1. Calculate 2016-17 ISP (identified/enrolled \*100). If grouping schools, sum all identified and enrolled before dividing.
2. If the ISP is higher than the year prior to choosing CEP, participants may want to restart their 4-year cycle.

Non-CEP schools/LEAs may want to evaluate their ISP and opt into the CEP.

1. Calculate 2016-17 ISP (identified/enrolled \*100). If grouping schools, sum all identified and enrolled before dividing.
2. Multiply the ISP by 1.6 to determine the percentage of meals that will be reimbursed by USA at the free rate (up to 100%).
3. Calculate preliminary MFP at risk (free + reduced + LEP – unduplicated\*) and compare that to February 1, 2016 at risk.

*\*Exclude all students not enrolled on the count date, were age 22 on the first day of school, or in pre-K (grade code 24).*

4. Decide whether the CEP is right for your LEA.

Remember, LEAs have flexibility on which schools or groups of schools participate in the program. It is not an all or nothing decision.

### Contact information:

- Questions about the CEP/Opting In/Changing Rate – [Judy.Stracener@la.gov](mailto:Judy.Stracener@la.gov)
- Questions about MFP: [Melanie.Ruiz@la.gov](mailto:Melanie.Ruiz@la.gov)