**Community Eligibility Provision Facts**

The Community Eligibility Provision Fact Sheet provides information on reimbursement rates, application process, identified student percentage, no cost meals, and qualifying schools.

**Facts**

* The CEP reduces application burdens to once every four years.
* The CEP uses Direct Certification percentages to qualify sites for participation.
* Schools on the CEP will never collect meal eligibility applications, complete the Verification Process, or categorize the meals as free, reduced-price, or paid when serving the meals.
* Breakfast and lunch must be served at no cost to all students in schools that are on the CEP.
* CEP schools must have a minimum identified student percentage (ISP) of 40 percent, based on enrollment, to participate in the CEP.
* The identified students are the number of students approved as eligible for free meals and are not subject to verification. This definition includes students directly certified through SNAP, TANF, and FDPIR participation as well as homeless students on the liaison list, Head Start, pre-K Even Start, migrant youth, runaways, and non-applicants approved by local officials identified through means other than an application. Foster children certified through means other than an application are also included as well as students certified for free meals based on a letter provided by the household from the SNAP agency. Students who are categorically eligible based on information, such as a case number, submitted through a free and reduced price application are NOT included.
* The ISP is determined by dividing the number of identified students, as of April 1 of the SY prior to starting the CEP, by the number of enrolled students as of the same date, and multiplying the quotient by 100.
* Schools may qualify individually or as a group to reach the ISP threshold of 40 percent.
* The reimbursement rate for both lunch and breakfast is determined by multiplying the ISP by a factor of 1.6. The resulting number is the percent of meals reimbursed at the free reimbursement rate, with the remaining meals reimbursed at the paid rate. No meals are reimbursed at the reduced-price rate while sites participate in the CEP. For example, a school with an ISP of 50 percent would be reimbursed at the free rate of 80 percent of the breakfasts and lunches it served (50 percent x 1.6 = 80 percent) and the remaining 20 percent would be reimbursed at the paid rate.
* Schools, or a group of schools, with an ISP of 62.5 percent or higher may be eligible to be reimbursed at the free meal rate for **100% of all** meals served.
* The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is allowed to change the multiplier factor each SY to a number between 1.3 and 1.6. However, the multiplier will be determined in year one and will remain the same for the four-year cycle.
* Participating schools are guaranteed to receive the same or higher reimbursement rate for each year of the four year cycle, based on the ISP each April 1.
* If the ISP increases in years two through four, a school may apply for their reimbursement to be paid based on the higher ISP.
* If the ISP decreases in years two through four, the reimbursement rate will be paid based on the ISP determined in year one.
* If the ISP decreases at a site to lower than 40 percent but is at least 30 percent in year four, the school can qualify for a grace year and continue with the CEP for a fifth year. Reimbursements in the grace year will be paid based on the ISP rate as of April 1 of year four.
* No later than June 30, the MDE-OCN must receive applications to participate in the CEP.

**Benefits**

* All students receive two healthy meals at no charge. Students that have access to better nutrition tend to perform better academically, have better health, and maintain better school attendance.
* Paperwork for schools and families is dramatically reduced. Schools participating in the CEP no longer have to collect and certify applications or complete the annual Verification Process. **Please note, all SFAs, including SFAs with all schools exempt from verification requirements, must complete applicable sections of the FNS 742, Verification Collection Report.**

For more information contact the MDE-OCN Help Desk at 601-576-4955.