

Good afternoon SFSAs,

Recently we encouraged you to continue to import Direct Certification files as there have been increases in SNAP participation. This change may affect participation in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and possibly other funding that utilizes F/R eligibility data, such as MAEP. Shortly after our email, some SFAs reported only small changes in their Direct Certification numbers.

We have been in contact with the MSDH and they have provided an updated SNAP file to MDE. The good news is, we have seen the expected increase in Direct Certification. While each SFA's amount of change will vary, overall there is an almost **12% increase** from the previous file. Please upload the most recent file immediately into your Eligibility software.

### **CEP Deadline**

USDA has extended the deadlines related to CEP election for the upcoming school year. **SFAs will have until August 31, 2020, to make the election.** We encourage you to make the decision before school begins as this will affect your Point of Sale and Counting/Claiming procedures.

### **CEP Data**

By federal regulation, the Direct Certification data utilized to elect CEP is "as of April 1." However, for the upcoming school year, the **USDA is allowing Direct Certification data from any point in time between April 1 and June 30 to be used.**

### **District ISP**

As always, SFAs can pull their own Direct Certification data from MSIS (SNAP, homeless, foster). This data may be supplemented by a local list such as from the local Child Protection Services office. If available, a local list could be more up-to-date.

### **OCN ISP Report**

The OCN annually publishes the Identified Student Percentage for every school in the State, based on the MSIS data. This year, **the list will be published on or by June 15**, due to the USDA extensions and an effort to supply the most accurate data. We will notify all SFAs when it is published. SFAs electing to utilize State data for CEP election (or to start a new cycle at a higher claiming percentage) will not be able to supplement the data with local lists, since the State's data does not contain the names of the identified children and there would be a risk of duplication.

### **Effects of SNAP Increase**

SFAs renewing CEP: If this is a renewal year, compare State and local data to see which is more beneficial. Due to the recent surge in SNAP participants, you may see an increase from your last base year.

SFAs not in a Base Year: You may renew your base year at any time in the cycle. Current year percentages may be higher than your original base year, making this an effective time to renew.

SFAs not Participating in CEP : The increase in ISP may make CEP a viable solution for your District. Schools previously ineligible may now meet the required thresholds.

### **Benefits of CEP**

CEP can simplify program operations while providing meals to all students at no charge. Each of these factors, along with items listed below, are even more critical as we face the uncertainty of how CN Programs will operate in SY 2020-2021 and possibly beyond.

- All students receive meals at no cost
- Eliminates the need to track and collect unpaid meal charges
- Reduced paperwork, eliminates collection of F/R applications
- Simplified Point of Sale (no cash needed)
- Increase in participation

If you need assistance regarding the renewal of a Base Year or are considering using the CEP for the first time, please contact our Schools Support Division for assistance. You may also visit the link below, USDA's Community Eligibility Resource Center, for additional information.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp/community-eligibility-provision-resource-center>

Stay safe!  
Scott

Scott Clements, **State Director**