




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)

FROM: John D. Frassinelli, Division Director 
School Health, Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: June 24, 2021

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum No. 06-21
Annual Application Process for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

This memo provides guidance to school food authorities (SFAs) on the CEP application deadlines for school year 2021-22.

On March 26, 2021, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued, and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) opted in to, [COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #82: Nationwide Waiver of Community Eligibility Provision Deadlines in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#). This nationwide waiver extends the deadlines for annual CEP notifications and other CEP provisions, and remains in place until September 30, 2021. **Note:** The extended deadlines are specific to the exceptional circumstances created by COVID-19, and are not permanent.

The CEP provides an alternative approach for offering school meals in local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools in low-income areas, instead of collecting individual household applications for free and reduced-price school meals. The CEP allows schools that predominantly serve students with low-incomes to offer free, nutritious school meals to all students through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). LEAs are eligible to participate in the CEP if the Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for the entire district, groups of schools, or an individual school meets or exceeds 40 percent. The ISP is the proportion of identified students (out of all enrolled students) who are directly certified for free school meals through a means other than the school meal application, and is calculated by dividing the total number of identified students by the total student enrollment. Participation in the CEP is not mandatory, even if a LEA meets eligibility requirements.

Eligible LEAs Interested in Implementing the CEP

LEAs that meet at least one of the following criteria must formally apply to participate in the CEP for school year 2021-22:

- LEAs/schools electing CEP participation for the first time;
- LEAs/schools in the mid-cycle of CEP participation that are requesting changes to their currently approved ISP;
- LEAs/schools that are currently in the fourth year of CEP participation with an ISP greater than or equal to 40 percent, and would like to start a new four-year cycle; and
- LEAs/schools currently in the fourth year of CEP participation with a new, calculated ISP greater than or equal to 30 percent, but less than 40 percent (eligible for one “grace” year based on the ISP as of the LEA’s selected date between July 1, 2020, and June 7, 2021, in year 4 of the current four-year cycle).

Grace Year for LEAs and Schools

Participating LEAs and schools that are in year four of the four-year CEP cycle may continue participating in the CEP for one grace year (a fifth year) if the ISP on their selected date (between July 1, 2020, and June 7, 2021) is at least 30 percent, but less than 40 percent. Reimbursement for schools in a grace year is based on the ISP as of the LEA’s selected date between July 1, 2020, and June 7, 2021, in year 4 of the current four-year cycle. During a “grace” year, the percentage of meals reimbursed at the free rate is based on the lower ISP, as determined by data from **one chosen date** anytime during the period from **July 1, 2020, through June 7, 2021**.

LEAs and schools that reach the required 40 percent threshold during the period from July 1, 2020, through June 7, 2021 of the grace year are eligible to begin a new four-year cycle in the following school year. LEAs and schools that do not meet the threshold as of April 1, 2022, of the grace year must return to standard counting and claiming or elect another special provision option, and must collect school meal applications, in the following school year.

CEP Notification Requirements

Even if LEAs opt to implement the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) for SY 2021-22, LEAs and schools must notify the CSDE no later than **July 15, 2021**, if they intend to:

- formally apply for the CEP for the next school year;
- continue with their current ISP (for mid-cycle CEP participating LEAs and schools);
- recalculate their ISP; or
- withdraw from the CEP and revert to the regular meal counting and claiming process.

To notify the CSDE about the LEA/school’s CEP decisions above, e-mail your [CSDE school nutrition consultant](#).

CEP Application Processes and Deadlines

Due to extenuating circumstances created by COVID-19 school closures, the application deadline for formal application for CEP participation (new or recalculating LEAs and schools) in school year 2021-22 is extended to **September 30, 2021** (instead of June 30, 2021). Eligible LEAs interested in CEP participation must follow the CSDE's guidelines to formally apply for the CEP and must submit all documentation to support ISP calculations from the same chosen date between **July 1, 2020, through June 7, 2021**. The CSDE will validate this data before finalizing and accepting any ISPs for claiming purposes for school year 2021-22.

The CEP application requires uploading the following three documents to the Connecticut Online Application and Claiming System for Child Nutrition Programs (CNP System) and all documents must draw data from the same chosen date: 1) [CEP participation worksheets](#); 2) master student enrollment file; and 3) student identification list. For detailed guidance on the master student enrollment file, see "Required Procedure for Developing the LEA's Master Enrollment File" in CSDE [Operational Memorandum 04-21](#), *Annual Notification Requirement for all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP): Due June 15, 2021: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)*.

Note: Do not upload any application documents to the CNP System before contacting the CSDE for guidance. The CEP application documents are available on the CSDE's [CEP](#) webpage.

The table on page 4 summarizes the required CEP actions and due dates for LEAs. Questions may be directed to your [CSDE school nutrition consultant](#).

**Summary of CEP Application Deadlines
for NSLP and SBP Public and Private School Sponsors**

| Category | Action required |
|---|--|
| <p>Eligible LEAs and schools that meet one of the criteria below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs/schools electing CEP for the first time; • LEAs/schools currently in year four of their ISP cycle; • LEAs/schools in the mid-cycle of CEP participation and requesting changes to their current ISP (e.g., population changes, grades removed/added, schools merge, ISP is higher, etc.); or • LEAs/schools currently in the fourth year of CEP participation with an ISP greater than or equal to 30 percent but less than 40 percent (eligible for one “grace” year). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By July 15, 2021, notify the CSDE of the LEA/school’s intention to participate in the CEP for school year 2021-22. * • By September 30, 2021, apply to participate in the CEP by uploading the three required CEP application documents to the CSDE’s online CNP System: 1) CEP Participation Worksheets; 2) Master Student Enrollment File; and 3) Identified Student List. All three documents must be from the one chosen date anytime during the period from July 1, 2020, through June 7, 2021. |
| <p>Currently participating LEAs and schools that are in the mid-cycle of CEP participation with no intention of revising the ISP.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By July 15, 2021, notify the CSDE of the LEA/school’s intention to participate in the CEP for school year 2021-22 using their current, approved ISP. * |
| <p>LEAs and schools that intend to withdraw from CEP participation.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By September 30, 2021, notify the CSDE of the LEA/school’s intention to end CEP participation for school year 2021-22. * • Note: These LEAs and schools must either enroll in another provision program or return to standard counting and claiming. |
| <p>* Notify the CSDE by e-mailing your CSDE school nutrition consultant.</p> | |

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Important: This is a numbered Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) operational memorandum that contains important program information. Please read carefully and retain for future reference. All CSDE operational memoranda are posted on the CSDE’s [Operational Memoranda for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.