



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Sponsors of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

**FROM:** Shannon K. Yearwood, Bureau Chief   
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, Connecticut State Department of Education

**DATE:** March 18, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Operational Memorandum No. 07-26  
Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) 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 April 10, 2026

This memo provides guidance to school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) NSLP and/or SBP to fulfill federal regulatory requirements governing the collection of timely, school-specific data to inform the development of the school year (SY) 2026-27 CEP eligibility lists.

This annual notification requirement does **not** apply to residential child care institutions (RCCIs) or sponsors of the Special Milk Program.

### Federal Requirements

The National School Lunch Act (NSLA) requires the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to annually notify LEAs of **districtwide** eligibility for CEP participation [42 U.S.C. 1759a(a)(1)(F)(x)(II)]. All LEAs (regardless of participation or intent to participate in the CEP) must submit **school-level** CEP eligibility data to the CSDE [42 U.S.C. 1759a(a)(1)(F)(x)(III)].

### Reporting Process

All public and private SFAs participating in the NSLP and SBP (on behalf of the LEA) must enter the three specified data elements (refer to page 2) into the CSDE's Online Application and Claiming System (CNP System) **by close of business on April 10, 2026**.

These data elements are regulatory requirements of the NSLA and serve as a notice of CEP eligibility and near eligibility to LEAs and schools.

This data reporting is mandatory for **all** SFAs participating in the NSLP and SBP, including SFAs that do not currently participate or intend to participate in the CEP.

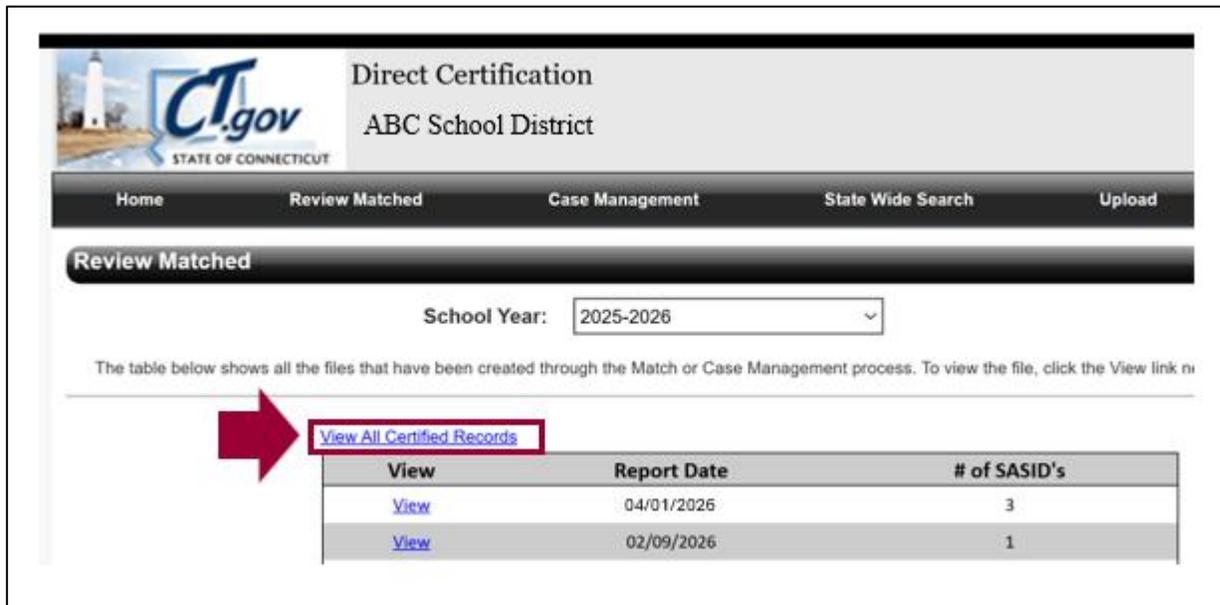
## Required Data Elements

All primary source data documents used to support the data entered into the CNP System must be retained by the LEA and stored in compliance with federal regulations related to [records retention for the CEP](#). Supporting documents do **not** need to be uploaded or submitted to the CSDE at this time.

Only students who have access to the NSLP and/or SBP should be included in the total number of directly certified students and total student enrollment.

- LEAs with interschool agreements must collect required data from recipient sites under the agreement.
- Private schools must save an enrollment file in case that school will be participating in the CEP.

SFAs are required to enter the three required data elements into the CNP System, specifically from **April 1, 2026**, for each school that operates the NSLP or SBP. The data must reflect all enrolled students directly certified in SY 2025-26, up to and including **April 1, 2026**. SFAs will select “View All Certified Records” (see below) when accessing the CSDE’s direct certification list.



Direct Certification  
ABC School District

Home Review Matched Case Management State Wide Search Upload

Review Matched

School Year: 2025-2026

The table below shows all the files that have been created through the Match or Case Management process. To view the file, click the View link in

[View All Certified Records](#)

View	Report Date	# of SASID's
<a href="#">View</a>	04/01/2026	3
<a href="#">View</a>	02/09/2026	1

SFAs must use April 1, 2026, data and enter the three required CEP data elements listed below:

1. Total number of directly certified students up to and including April 1, 2026, including those with extended eligibility using the CSDE’s [Direct Certification Web Application](#). Only include students identified as participating in SNAP (FS), Free Medicaid (FM), or TANF (AF).

**Do not include students participating in Reduced Medicaid (RM) or the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (SEBT) Program (FE or RE).**

2. Total number of students, by school, who are manually directly certified or directly certified outside of the CSDE's Direct Certification Web Application, e.g., homeless, runaway, some Head Start, and foster students. Refer to the USDA's [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#) for acceptable documentation.
3. Total student enrollment on April 1, 2026, from the LEA's master enrollment file. The master enrollment file must be provided by the LEA's central office Student Information System. The master enrollment file never comes from the food service point-of-sale system.

### **Required Procedure for Developing the LEA's Master Enrollment File**

The LEA's total enrollment (master file) from April 1, 2026, must only be obtained from the LEA's central office Student Information System, and saved as an Excel document. The file must be maintained according to the federal regulations pertaining to [records retention for the CEP](#).

The file must contain the following:

- date that the data pertains to;
- school name;
- school facility code (assigned by the state Public School Information System (PSIS));
- student last name;
- student first name;
- student address;
- student date of birth;
- student grade; and
- state assigned student identifier (SASID) number for students in public schools.

For information on how to access the CNP System to enter the required data, please refer to the CSDE's document, [Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) Data Collection Guidance for School-level Eligibility Information](#).

Questions may be directed to your CSDE [school nutrition team member](#).

SKY:saa

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.

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