

Operating Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in SY 2026-27

Illinois State Board of Education
Nutrition Department
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What is CEP?

- CEP is a USDA-approved alternative to collecting, approving, and verifying Household Eligibility Applications for free and reduced-price eligible students in high-poverty Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) for schools participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Programs (SBP).
- CEP is a four-year reimbursement option for schools operating both NSLP and SBP.
- CEP schools use an approved percentage for meal claiming purposes. This approved percentage is determined based on the number of Identified Students enrolled in the school.
- An LEA may participate in CEP for some or all schools in the LEA.

CEP Benefits

- **Students**

- Breakfast and lunch offered daily to all students
- No reimbursable meal charges
- Meals are healthy and nutritious
- Ensures students are ‘ready to learn’
- No overt identification

- **Parents**

- Simplification of meal benefit paperwork
- No cash payment for meals

- **Schools**

- Reduced School Nutrition Program paperwork
- Streamlines meal service
- Eases implementation of alternative Breakfast models



To be eligible for CEP, a school must:

- Have a minimum level (25%) Identified Students as of April 1 in the year prior to implementing CEP;
- Agree to serve lunches **and** breakfasts at no cost to all students for up to four consecutive years;
- Agree to cover with non-federal funds any costs of providing meals at no cost to all students above amounts provided in federal assistance;
- Not collect free and reduced-price Household Eligibility Applications from households in participating schools during the period of participation in the CEP;
 - A USDA program, Summer EBT, will require socioeconomic eligibility determinations for all enrolled students.
 - Public schools in Illinois still need student socioeconomic data for SIS low-income indicator annually.
- Count total breakfasts and lunches served to students; and
- **Not** be a residential childcare institution (RCCI) as that term is set forth in the definition of “School” in 7 CFR 210.2.

Determining School Eligibility

- The percent of Identified Students must first be determined by the participating school, then may be used by school, group of schools within the LEA, or districtwide.
- Percent Identified Students is equal to number of Identified Students divided by total enrollment.
- All CEP application data is as of April 1.
- The percent of Identified Students is then multiplied by the USDA-determined factor of 1.6 (the current factor).

Who are Enrolled Students?

- Enrolled students are students who are enrolled in the school (SIS serving school) applying for CEP who have access to at least one USDA-funded School Nutrition Program (SNP) meal service (breakfast and/or lunch) at the school.
- Students who do not have access to either breakfast or lunch, or students tuitioned to other schools, are **not** counted in the student enrollment numbers for the CEP application.
- Enrolled half day students may be included if they are offered at least one USDA-funded SNP meal service (breakfast and/or lunch).



Who are Identified Students?

- Identified Students are:
 - Directly certified for free meals based on their participation in the:
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
 - Income-eligible **free** Medicaid
 - **Reduced Medicaid matches are not included.**
 - the extension of benefits to students within the same household (for above programs)
 - foster children
 - Homeless*
 - Runaway*
 - Migrant youth*
 - Head Start*

* As certified by the program coordinator

Maximizing the Number of Identified Students

- It is very important that all schools considering implementation of CEP maximize the number of Identified Students as of April 1 the year prior to implementation (if applying for SY 2027-28 = April 1, 2027).
- ISBE recommends that **all** LEAs conduct monthly direct certification.
 - USDA requires at least once annually.
- Extend **free** direct certification meal benefits to all students within the same household.
- For household applications that include a SNAP or TANF case number or indicate that a child is in foster care, search the direct certification system for those students.
 - If a student is found as a **free** Direct Certification match, the student may be counted as an Identified Student.

Is CEP Financially Feasible?

- Annually track the Identified Student data for your schools participating in CEP for all years of your CEP approval.
- This is an important step in your planning.
 - If CEP is financially feasible, then plan to apply during the CEP application period, April 1–June 30 annually for the subsequent school year.
 - If CEP is not financially feasible, then the sponsor will need to communicate with your local community and ensure that regular meal counting and claiming regulations are adhered to for USDA compliance (free, reduced-price, and paid meal eligibility).

Overview of the CEP Identified Student Percentages, the CEP Claiming Percentages, and Average Lunch and Breakfast Reimbursement

Based on SY 2026-27 Rates of Reimbursement, 60% or greater NSLP, Severe Need Breakfast

CEP Identified Student %	Free Claiming % (* 1.6 USDA factor)	Paid Claiming % (100-Free)	Average Lunch Reimbursement	Average Breakfast Reimbursement
62.50%	100.00%	0.00%	\$4.98	\$3.16
55.00%	88.00%	12.00%	\$4.45	\$2.83
52.00%	83.20%	16.80%	\$4.24	\$2.70
50.00%	80.00%	20.00%	\$4.10	\$2.61
45.00%	72.00%	28.00%	\$3.74	\$2.39
40.00%	64.00%	36.00%	\$3.39	\$2.17
35.00%	56.00%	44.00%	\$3.04	\$1.95
30.00%	48.00%	52.00%	\$2.68	\$1.74
25.00%	40.00%	60.00%	\$2.33	\$1.52

CEP Sample Notice

Sample Letter to Households in Schools/Districts Participating in CEP
(Copy and Paste Sample Letter onto School District Letterhead)

Community Eligibility Provision Notification

Dear Parent or Guardian: Date: _____

We are pleased to inform you that _____
(insert name of school(s)/district)
will be implementing a new option available to schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs called the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for the current school year.

What does this mean for you and your children attending the school(s) identified above?

Great news for you and your students! All enrolled students of

(insert name of school(s)/district implementing CEP)

are eligible to receive a healthy breakfast and lunch at school at **no charge** to your household each day of the this school year. No further action is required of you. Your child(ren) will be able to participate in these meal programs without having to pay a fee or submit an application.

If we can be of any further assistance, please contact us at _____
(insert school contact information)

Sincerely,

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

- Sample notice available from ISBE, once approved.
- This is specific to meal services.
- If CEP approved, **annually** notify enrolled students and families.

WINS: SNP Program Application versus CEP

SNP Program Application

- Application completed annually in the spring
- Program selection details
 - NSLP
 - SBP
 - After School Snack
 - Seamless Summer Option
- July 1–June 30 approval period

CEP Evaluation and Application Module

- Application completed April 1–June 30
- CEP approval is for four consecutive school years
- July 1–June 30 approval period

WINS: Main Dashboard

Sponsor Tasks	Sponsor Applications & Participation	Site Applications	Claims & Monitoring	Sponsor Info
Administrative Tasks				
Sponsor Tasks		Site Application Tasks		
- Batch Daily Meal Counts - Batch Participation Detail - Add/Remove Detail Dates - Batch Site Questionnaire - Batch Site Participation - Is Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for you? CEP Group Information - Add New Site - Deactivate/Re-activate Site(s) - Deactivate Sponsor - Review Citation Responses - Waivers		- Enroll Site In New Program - Edit Site Questionnaire - Edit Program Participation - Edit Participation Detail		
Reports		Budget		
- Waiver Submissions - Applications Not Received - NSLP Verification Summary Report - Direct Certification - Deleted Sites - Claim Data Report - Summary Reports - Applications Submitted for Sponsor - Summary Reports - Applications Submitted for Sites - Summary Reports - List of Sites and Applications Submitted		No WINS Budgets required.		

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WINS: CEP Group Information Link

3867-06016088002-A27

Approved

Student Counts		Rate Percent		Group Info	
Identified Students:	127	CEP Eligibility:	69.78 %	Number of Sites:	1
Enrollment:	182	Free Claiming %:	100.00 %	Begin Date:	7/1/2026
Modified Students:	0	Paid Claiming %:	0.00 %	End Date:	6/30/2030

Rate Info

Average Breakfast Reimbursement:	\$3.16
Average Lunch Reimbursement:	\$4.98

WithdrawDelete

WINS: CEP Group Information Link (two group example)

2853-32046024027-A25

Approved

Student Counts	
Identified Students:	10
Enrollment:	16
Modified Students:	0

Rate Percent	
CEP Eligibility:	62.5 %
Free Claiming %:	100 %
Paid Claiming %:	0 %

Group Info	
Number of Sites:	1
Begin Date:	8/26/2024
End Date:	6/30/2028

Rate Info

Average Breakfast Reimbursement: \$2.88

Average Lunch Reimbursement: \$4.55

WithdrawDelete



2848-32046024027-A25

Approved

Student Counts	
Identified Students:	266
Enrollment:	455
Modified Students:	0

Rate Percent	
CEP Eligibility:	58.46 %
Free Claiming %:	93.54 %
Paid Claiming %:	6.46 %

Group Info	
Number of Sites:	2
Begin Date:	7/10/2024
End Date:	6/30/2028

Rate Info

Average Breakfast Reimbursement: \$2.72

Average Lunch Reimbursement: \$4.29

WithdrawDelete

WINS: CEP Group Information Link (Site-Specific CEP Data)

1								
2	SiteName	SiteNumber	Identified Students	Enrollment	Identified Students %	GroupName	Status	Site % Eligibility (calculated)
3	Westview Elem School	10368	220	431	51.04	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	81.664
4	Robeson Elem School	10366	222	434	51.15	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	81.84
5	Kenwood Elem School	10365	215	415	51.81	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	82.896
6	Jefferson Middle School	10359	370	704	52.56	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	84.096
7	Dr Howard Elem School	10363	254	443	57.34	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	91.744
8	Young Adult Program	82284	15	24	62.5	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	100
9	Novak Academy	60975	32	51	62.75	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	100
10	Stratton Elementary School	40757	267	414	64.49	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	100
11	Garden Hills Elem Academy	10364	330	463	71.27	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	100
12	Washington Elem School	10367	192	251	76.49	3752-09010004026-A27	Approved	100
13								

- Site-level CEP Data is used to determine percent eligibility for USDA Programs such as Summer Food Service Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and After School Snacks, as well as Illinois State Meal Service Mandates.
- This data is also used to publish the annual eligibility data file. This is the Identified Student percentage multiplied by the USDA factor of 1.6 to provide equivalent data.
 - Expect the SY 2026-27 data file in early January 2027.

WINS: CEP Claiming

Daily Meal Counts

Claim

Calendar Year: 2026
Calendar Month: 8

Quick Links

[Site Claims](#)
[Participation Detail](#)

Version

Selected Claim:
New Claim

Meal Counts

Daily Totals

Program Daily Meal Counts

- School Breakfast Severe Need (41%)
- National School Lunch 60% or more Eligible (85%)

Show All ☒

Day	Meal	Program	CEP
13	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
14	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
17	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
18	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
19	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
20	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
21	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
24	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
25	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
26	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
27	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
28	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
31	Breakfast	School Breakfast	CEP
13	Lunch	National School Lunch	CEP
14	Lunch	National School Lunch	CEP
17	Lunch	National School Lunch	CEP
18	Lunch	National School Lunch	CEP

WINS: CEP Claim Statistics

- Enrollment and CEP Eligible on the Claim is the same number.
- ADA is Average Daily Attendance.

Daily Meal Counts

Claim	Quick Links
Calendar Year: 2024 Calendar Month: 8	Site Claim Summary Site Claims Participation Detail Sponsor Claim Summary

Version
Selected Claim: 8: Aug 2024 Claim - Sent to FRIS - 09/10/2024 Revise

Meal Counts	Statistics																
	<table border="1"><thead><tr><th colspan="2">School Breakfast</th><th colspan="2">National School Lunch</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Enrollment</td><td>50</td><td>Enrollment</td><td>50</td></tr><tr><td>ADA</td><td>40</td><td>ADA</td><td>40</td></tr><tr><td>CEP Eligible</td><td>50</td><td>CEP Eligible</td><td>50</td></tr></tbody></table>	School Breakfast		National School Lunch		Enrollment	50	Enrollment	50	ADA	40	ADA	40	CEP Eligible	50	CEP Eligible	50
School Breakfast		National School Lunch															
Enrollment	50	Enrollment	50														
ADA	40	ADA	40														
CEP Eligible	50	CEP Eligible	50														
Claim Summary																	

[Previous](#) [Next](#)

2025

2025

2025

2025

WINS: CEP Claim Data Summary

Student Counts		Rate Percent		Group Info	
Identified Students:	1023	CEP Eligibility:	44.73 %	Number of Sites:	5
Enrollment:	2287	Free Claiming %:	71.57 %	Begin Date:	7/1/2023
Modified Students:	0	Paid Claiming %:	28.43 %	End Date:	6/30/2027

CEP Notes

Group Name	03025040026-A24	CEP Eligibility	44.73 %
Status	Approved	Free Claiming %	71.57 %
Begin Date	7/1/2023	Paid Claiming %	28.43 %
End Date	6/30/2027		

Meals

Illinois Free Breakfast - Breakfast

Illinois Free Breakfast

Free 5911

Illinois Free Lunch - Lunch

Illinois Free Lunch

Free 11929

School Breakfast - Breakfast

Severe Need

5911+2349 = 8260

Free 5911
Paid 2349

National School Lunch - Lunch

Less than 60% Eligible

11929+4739=16,668

Free 11929
Paid 4739

2025

2025

2025

2025

WINS CEP Approval Letter

This is found under the program year in which the CEP application was submitted. This is generally requested by auditors annually.

WINS
Web-based Illinois Nutrition System



Sponsor Lookup

Name / RCDT / City / Address / Zip

Program

Program Year

Attachments

Attachments

Filename	Desc.	Doc Type	Expires	Last Update Date
ApprovalNslp_20221007_120027.pdf	Auto-Generated Approval Letter	Approval Letter		10/7/2022 12:00:33 AM
ApprovalNslp_20220929_120238.pdf	Auto-Generated Approval Letter	Approval Letter		9/29/2022 12:02:42 AM
CepWithdrawalNotification_20220923_014802.pdf	Auto-Generated CEP Notification	CEP Withdrawal Notice		9/23/2022 1:48:03 AM
ApprovalCep_20220923_014759.pdf	Auto-Generated CEP Notification	CEP Approval Letter		9/23/2022 1:48:01 AM
ApprovalNslp_20220813_120016.pdf	Auto-Generated Approval Letter	Approval Letter		8/13/2022 12:00:23 AM
ApprovalNslp_20220805_120035.pdf	Auto-Generated Approval Letter	Approval Letter		8/5/2022 12:00:37 AM

Managing CEP: Closed, New Schools



- If you have closed or new schools, generally the school district should plan to complete the CEP application process for that next school year.
 - In some instances, we can work with schools if one school building closes and all enrolled students move to a new school building, but this is rare.
 - In WINS, meals are claimed where the students are enrolled in SIS as their SIS serving school.
- Please check all CEP approvals and site listings annually for accuracy.

Managing CEP: Year 2, Year 3, and Year 4

- Evaluate Identified Student numbers annually.
- If the numbers increase for the group of schools, USDA allows you to withdrawal the current group and reestablish the four-year cycle with the new claiming percentages.
- If the numbers decrease, no action is needed. The school remains at the initial base year claiming percentages.
 - You will want to monitor if the numbers decrease below 25% Identified, as the schools could only qualify for a grace year for CEP.

CEP Grace Year

- If after the four-year CEP cycle a CEP group has an Identified Student percentage (ISP) at least 15% but less than 25%, that CEP group may continue participating in CEP for one grace year (a fifth year).
- Reimbursement for a CEP group in a grace year is based on the ISP on April 1 in Year 4 of the current four-year cycle.
 - This impacts a small number of CEP approved sponsors. Refer to the [USDA CEP Planning and Implementation Guidance](#).
- This CEP grace year application is completed in WINS using the CEP Module.
- This is generally not a financially feasible options for most sponsors but is allowable by USDA.

CEP Evaluation Worksheet

- To assist schools in evaluating the CEP versus Traditional Method, ISBE has developed worksheets for all the allowable NSLP and SBP meal reimbursement rates.
- The worksheet based on the district's approved NSLP and SBP meal reimbursement rates may be used to determine if CEP or traditional participation in the meal programs will provide a greater amount of reimbursement.
- **Note:** The worksheet only shows the difference in reimbursement amounts and does **not** identify any added value and/or savings to the school due to the certification and verification processes no longer required. Also, it assumes all revenue from reduced-price and paid students is collected.

Nutrition

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

Nutrition

School Nutrition Programs

National School Lunch Program

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

CEP is an alternative to collecting, approving, and verifying household eligibility applications for free and reduced price eligible students in high poverty local educational agencies (LEAs) for schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Application Process

Documents

Evaluation Worksheets

School Year 2026-27 CEP Evaluation Worksheets (Based on SY 2026-27 Rates of Reimbursements)

In order to determine which worksheet to use, the 60% rate refers to the district's National School Lunch Program rate of reimbursement. Those districts claiming 60% or greater F/R lunches two years prior receive the 60% or greater rate of reimbursement.

The Severe Need Breakfast, is higher rate of reimbursement provided to sites that claimed 40% or greater of their lunches as F/R two years prior. This information can be found on your most recent Approval Letter available in WINS under the attachment link (paper clip icon).

- [NSLP 60% rate and Non Severe Need Breakfast](#) 
- [NSLP 60% rate and Severe Need Breakfast](#) 
- [NSLP less than 60% rate and Non Severe Need Breakfast](#) 
- [NSLP less than 60% rate and Severe Need Breakfast](#) 

Updated to reflect SY 2026-27 Rates of Reimbursement

<https://www.isbe.net/cep>

CEP Application and Evaluation

Application Process

- [SY 26-27 CEP for Illinois Schools - Overview and Application Process Webinar](#) 🎥
 - [SY 26-27 CEP for Illinois Schools - Overview and Application Process Webinar Presentation](#) 📄
- [Operating CEP in SY 26-27](#) 🎥

CEP Application

The Online CEP Evaluation and Application Module remains open for evaluation year round. The CEP application is open annually from April 1 through June 30 for the subsequent school year election. The CEP approval is effective July 1 through June 30.

Step One of the CEP application process is to secure an April 1 enrollment file, ensuring that all NSLP/SBP students are included in the template format below. ISBE team members are available for technical assistance if needed. Contact us at cnp@isbe.net or (800) 545-7892.

- [Quick Reference Guide](#) 📄
- [Sample Template File](#) 📄
 - Only **CSV** file extension is supported
 - **First Name** is required (Cannot exceed 30 characters)
 - **Middle Name** is **not** required (Cannot exceed 30 characters)
 - **Last Name** is required (Cannot exceed 30 characters)
 - **Birth date** is required (Cannot be a future date)
 - **Gender** is required (Must be M or F)
 - **ISBE WINS Site number** is required
 - **Student Id** is **not** required
 - **Grade** is not required

CEP and Verification

- **Districtwide CEP**

- The verification process is **not** completed by a districtwide CEP sponsor, as the school did not collect and process any Household Eligibility Applications for meal benefits.
- Therefore, the Verification Summary Report is **not completed**.

- **Partial CEP District**

- If your district includes both CEP and non-CEP schools, the district is required to conduct the verification process only for Household Eligibility Applications submitted for students attending non-CEP schools.
- Data will be reported by the district on the verification summary report.

CEP and Meal Counting



- CEP schools must obtain an accurate meal count of reimbursable meals, both breakfast and lunches daily, to submit claims for reimbursement.
- Schools implementing CEP are encouraged to utilize existing Point of Service systems to ensure accurate meal counts as well as track adult meals and a la carte sales.
 - This ensures one meal per student per meal service.
 - Also serves as a best practice to have data regarding what students received reimbursable meals at school daily.

Meal Counting and Claiming in CEP

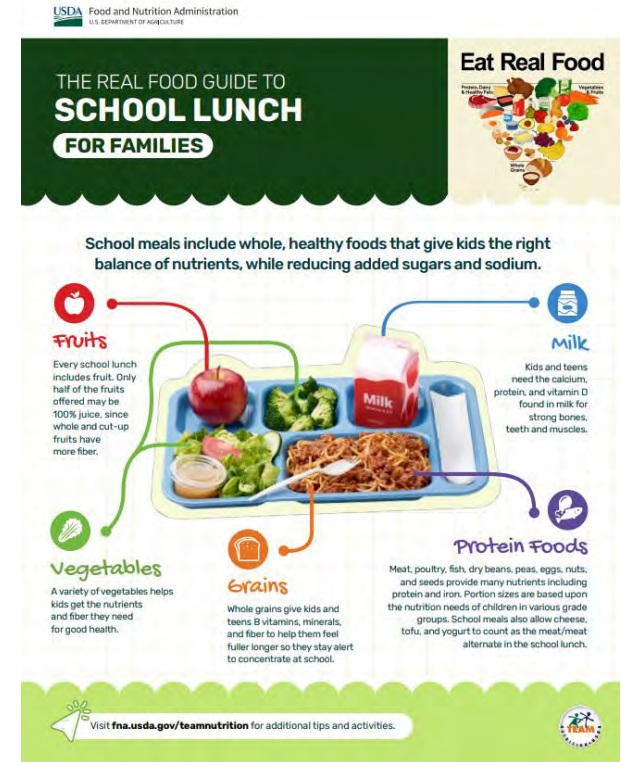


- Total Number of Reimbursable Breakfasts
- Total Number of Reimbursable Lunches
- Counted **daily** at the Point of Service

In the WINS system, when completing the CEP-approved site's claim each month, enter the total number of meals served and WINS will apply your approved claiming percentage to that number of meals.

CEP and a la Carte and Seconds

- CEP allows each student to have **one** reimbursable breakfast and **one** reimbursable lunch at school each school day.
- If the student wishes to purchase additional a la carte items, those prices are set by the local school district.
- USDA Smart Snacks and nonprogram food revenue requirements are applicable.



CEP and Special Milk Program



- If the student is offered a reimbursable meal and declines the meal, there is **no** federal reimbursement for the milk only.
- CEP school may only participate in the Special Milk Program if there is a group of students who **do not** have access to reimbursable meals, such as half-day students.
 - Even with half-day students, we will encourage meal services.
 - Breakfast for morning students
 - Lunch for afternoon students

CEP and Record Retention Requirements

- LEAs with schools participating in the CEP must maintain records specific to the CEP status that include:
 - Documentation used to develop the Identified Student percentage
 - Total number of breakfasts and lunches served daily
 - Percentages used to claim meal reimbursements
 - Non-federal funding sources used to cover any excess meal costs
- Section 7 CFR 245.9(h)(3)) requires the LEA to maintain the Identified Student percentage documentation for three years after submission of the last claim for reimbursement that was based on the data.
 - In case of an audit, this documentation must be retained beyond the three-year period for as long as required to resolve any issues raised by an audit.
- Failure to retain required documentation may result in removal from the CEP and/or fiscal action.
- ISP documentation includes Point of Service reports, Student Information System enrollment reports, direct certification lists and/or other lists certifying students are categorically eligible for free school meals, such as lists of students who are designated as homeless, migrant, runaway, or Head Start.

Impact on Other Program Areas and Grants

CEP Participation: Impact on Other Programs

- Participation in CEP impacts other areas of your school.
- It is important to share this information with your administration/school board/business manager so they are aware and can prepare for such impacts.
- Remember that schools/districts that operate via CEP will **not** have a meal benefit application process and therefore will **not** have an individual student eligibility status based on the Household Eligibility Application for NSLP.
 - For example, you will not know if Student A is eligible for free, reduced-price, or paid meal benefits.
- Other programs possibly impacted include:
 - Grants
 - Title I
 - E-Rate
 - Illinois School District Fees

Summer EBT and CEP



- Summer EBT is a federal nutrition program that provides a grocery benefit during the summer months to families with children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.
- The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 ([P.L 117-328](#)) authorized this permanent, nationwide Program beginning in 2024.
- Summer EBT is designed to reduce childhood hunger.
- Illinois participated in the Summer EBT program in the summer of 2026 with plans to continue.
- Eligible children will receive a one-time benefit of \$120 (2026 amount) per summer on an EBT card to purchase food.
- The USDA requires students enrolled in a CEP-approved school to reside in a household that is at or below the NSLP income threshold for reduced-price meal benefits (185% of the federal poverty level) **and** complete a Summer EBT application, unless they are directly certified for meal benefits via an allowable source.
- The Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) is the main contact agency for households for [Illinois Summer EBT](#).

Gathering Socioeconomic Status

- Schools participating in CEP may still need to collect individual socioeconomic status of students in CEP schools for other programs.
- **Socioeconomic data is required for public schools to mark students as low income in the Student Information System.**
 - Direct certification system data is not complete, accurate data.
 - Often, low-income families will need a determination letter from the school for other services.
- To assist schools in gathering this data, an Alternative Household Form has been developed.
 - This form is a resource that schools can use if they need individual student socioeconomic data. It is not related to the federal meal programs.
 - Funds from the nonprofit school lunch account **cannot** be used to fund the printing or processing of such form.

- Sample Household & Income Form (ISBE 69-72)
 - May be used locally to gather individual student socioeconomic status.
- A notification letter to household would need to be created locally.

Illinois School Fee Waiver Process

- Under Illinois law, public school districts are required to waive charges for textbooks and other fees for children whose families are unable to afford them, including children eligible for the federal free lunch and breakfast program, and for any other extenuating circumstances for which the school board will waive fees as communicated in its adopted policy (e.g., reduced-price lunch or medical emergencies) [105 ILCS 5/10-20.13 and 34-21.6]
- Because CEP schools do not assign individual student eligibility statuses for free or reduced-price meals, districts have the following options for fee waivers:
 - Do not assess or collect fees.
 - Collect socioeconomic information specifically for fee waiver determinations and apply fee waivers in accordance with local district policy.

Title I, Part A of the Elementary And Secondary Education Act Of 1965, as Amended CEP Guidance Materials

The U.S. Department of Education has issued two guidance documents related to Title I and CEP participating schools:

[The Community Eligibility Provision and Selected Requirements under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended \(Revised March 2015\)](#)

[Within-District Allocations under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended](#)

For questions specific to Title I, [contact your Title I consultant.](#)

E-Rate



- The Universal Service Schools and Libraries Program, commonly known as “E-Rate,” provides discounts to help eligible schools and libraries in the U.S. obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.
- Access the WINS CEP approval letter via the paperclip icon for documentation for E-rate auditors. (Slide 20)
- Most current guidance regarding E-Rate
 - [USDA Policy Memo SP08-2015](#) (Nov. 21, 2014)

CEP Timelines

April 1, 20XX: Determine the number of Identified Students and enrollment. Maintain proper documentation for both the Identified Students and enrollment.

April 1, 20XX: Complete CEP application via the online CEP Evaluation and Application Module available in WINS.

June 30, 20XX: Deadline to apply to participate in CEP.

June 30, 20XX: Deadline to withdraw from CEP.

Annual CEP Checklist

- ☐ Offer healthy, delicious reimbursable meals (breakfast and lunch) every day at school.
- ☐ Provide all student reimbursable meals at no cost.
- ☐ Conduct direct certification.
- ☐ Notify families of CEP status for meal benefits (beginning of school year).
- ☐ Identify low-income eligible students via alternate household form/process (public schools).
- ☐ Evaluate Identified Student numbers (April 1–June 30).
- ☐ Monitor end of your CEP cycle and evaluate financial feasibility to reapply.
 - ☐ If yes, complete CEP application when required.
 - ☐ If no, return to traditional meal counting and claiming.
- ☐ Market School Meals (NSLP, SBP) to all enrolled students.
- ☐ Market Summer Meal options to children in the area.



Contact the Nutrition Department

Telephone: 800-545-7892 (Illinois only)

217-782-2491

Email: cnp@isbe.net

Website: www.isbe.net/nutrition
www.isbe.net/cep

[ISBE Administrative Handbook – Community Eligibility Provision \(CEP\) and Provision 1, 2, and 3](#)

Thank you