

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Election Procedures for School Year 2025 - 2026

Issue Number: CNU E-Memo 25-2025

Correspondence Date: 4/23/2025

Regulatory Authority: [7 CFR 245](#); [Section 11 of the Richard B. Russell National School Act \(42 USC 1759a\)](#) ; [SP08-2024](#); [COM-25-055](#)

Response Required: No

Attention: Superintendents, Child Nutrition Directors, CFOs. Bookkeepers, Accountants

Contact: Donna Ratliff

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Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) special provision that provides schools with an alternative method for counting and claiming student meals in high poverty local educational agencies (LEAs). Schools must participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and a School Breakfast Program (SBP) for the 2025-2026 school year (SY). LEAs electing to participate in CEP agree to serve all students lunches and breakfasts at no charge for up to four (4) successive school years. LEAs may choose to participate as individual schools, groups of schools, or as a complete LEA.

Procedures to Participate:

LEAs that wish to participate in CEP for the 2025-2026 school year should email the following to ade.chnutcep@ade.arkansas.gov :

1. Completed SY2025-2026 CEP “Election to Participate” form.

For information regarding Identified Student Population Reporting (ISP) and the requirements to participate in CEP, refer to [CNU E Memo 18-2025](#) and [COM-25-055](#) . Information regarding percentage of Identified Students as reported by LEAs/Schools as of April 1, 2025, is available on the Child Nutrition website under “Special Provisions”. An LEA/school must have a minimum ISP of 25% to elect to participate in CEP.

2. Documentation of approval by the school board to participate in CEP.

Contact the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Child Nutrition Unit (CNU) at 501-324-9502 for additional information and assistance in the decision making process. Districts should read

the [Community Eligibility Provision and Implementation Guide](#) before electing CEP. USDA has provided a “Community Eligibility Provision Monthly Reimbursement Estimator” to assist in determining the cost effectiveness of implementing this special provision <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/community-eligibility-provision-resource-center>

Additional information may also be found on the CNU webpage under “[Special Provisions](#)”. LEAs are encouraged to contact their area specialists to discuss the potential financial impact of CEP.

The deadline to elect to participate in CEP for SY2025-2026 is June 30, 2025.

Approved LEAs/Schools choosing to participate in CEP will be notified of approval by letter after all documentation has been received and reviewed.

Districts will complete a validation process to confirm the Identified Student counts through their area specialists before election approvals are finalized.

The SY 2025-2026 Community Eligibility Provision Addendums to the Child Nutrition Agreement and Policy Statement will be included as an attachment with the approval letter.

These addendums must be signed and returned to CNU at the address provided. A copy of the signed CEP Addendum to the Agreement and Policy Statement will be returned to the SFA and must be on file before meals are provided to students at no charge.

For additional information on [Title I](#) and [E-Rate](#) for schools electing CEP refer to the “[Community Eligibility Provision Planning and Implementation Guidance](#)” (February 2024).

Attachments:

[2025-2026 CEP Election Form](#)