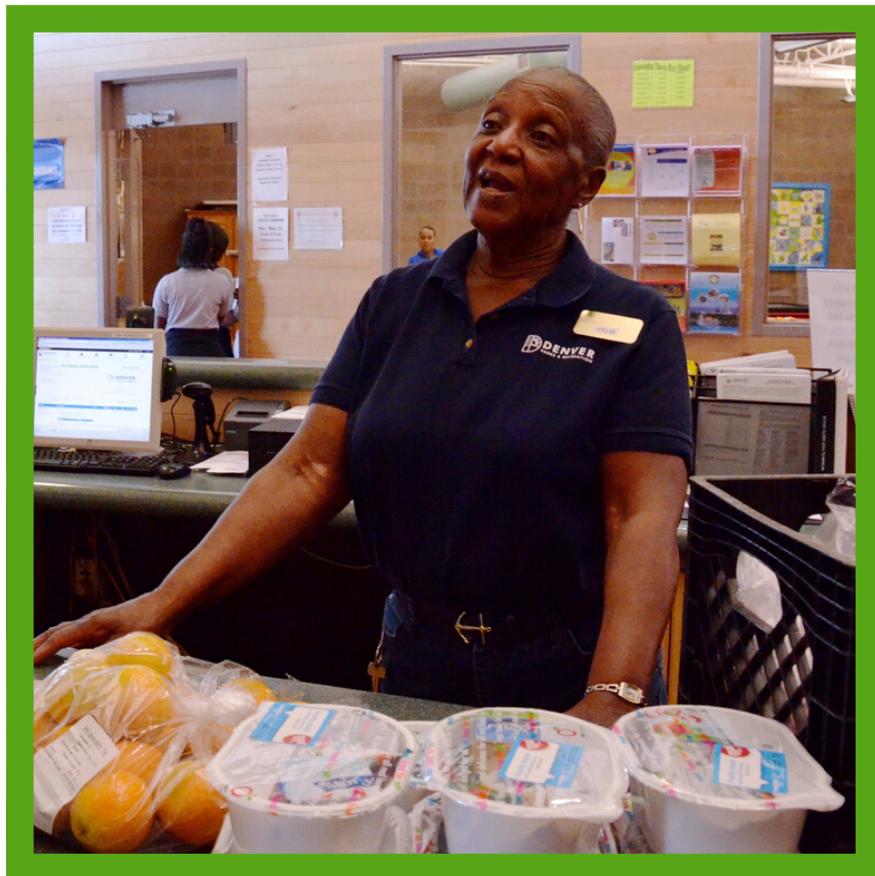


# QUALIFYING FOR PROVISIONAL PROGRAMS IN COLORADO

**A TOOLKIT FOR DISTRICTS TO INCREASE THEIR  
IDENTIFIED STUDENT PERCENTAGE**



If you are a school or district interested in Community Eligibility Provisions, refer to this toolkit for resources to galvanize your community!

This resource, created by Hunger Free Colorado, was made possible by the collaboration and partnership with the Colorado Department of Education, and funding from the Walmart Foundation and the Food Research Action Center (FRAC).

Hunger Free Colorado, a statewide nonprofit organization, connects families and individuals to food resources and fuels change in systems, policies and social views, so no Coloradan goes hungry. By leveraging the power of collaboration, innovation and partnership, we eliminate barriers to the access of affordable, nutritious food, so all Coloradans can thrive and reach their full potential.

Some of our key initiatives include a statewide, bilingual and confidential food resource hotline and mobile services, Hunger Through My Lens and the Colorado Food Pantry Network. Learn more and take action at [HungerFreeColorado.org](https://HungerFreeColorado.org).

The CDE School Nutrition Unit administers the USDA Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) that provide healthy food to children in Colorado. Each of these programs helps to fight hunger and obesity and promotes the health and well-being of children. School Nutrition is committed to ensuring all school-aged children have equal access to healthy meals by supporting, training, and connecting Colorado's child nutrition community.

# APPENDIX

- I. What is Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?
- II. Why should your school or district consider implementing Community Eligibility Provision?
- III. Generating Buy-in
  - a. Key Messages for School Employees
  - b. Key Messages for Food Service Staff
  - c. Key Messages for Families
  - d. Key Messages for Students
- IV. Best Practices to increase your Identified Student Percentage (ISP) through Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- V. Increase Direct Certification Rates
- VI. How to apply for Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

# WHAT IS CEP?

The Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP, is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. CEP allows these schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. [1] Community Eligibility is a proven tool to make sure children in schools with high-poverty rates are fueled and ready to learn. [2]

Instead of household applications, schools use claiming percentages based on the number of identified students for reimbursement through direct certification. Students are directly certified through participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or certified for free meals because they are homeless, a migrant, or runaway youth. This is called the Identified Student Percentage, or ISP.

In 2017-2018, only 21 percent of local education agencies in Colorado were eligible to participate in CEP. Low SNAP enrollment throughout Colorado is a driving factor to low ISPs across the state and cause districts with high need (measured by free and reduced-price meal participation) from participating.

For Local educational agencies (LEAs) to be eligible to implement CEP, the LEA must have one or more schools with an ISP of 40 percent or greater, as of April 1. LEAs must have an ISP equal or greater than 62.5 percent to claim a 100 percent free reimbursement rate.

# WHY CONSIDER CEP?

-  Some low-income families count on receiving healthy meals at school. With CEP, students do not experience lunch shaming because the meals are free to everyone.
-  Schools see a decrease in behavior problems and an increase in achievement when school meal participation increases.
-  Eliminate meal debt throughout the district: since all meals served are reimbursed there is no need to follow up with families to gather late meal fees.

[1] <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/community-eligibility-provision>

[2] Levin, Madeleine, and Zoë Neuberger. Community eligibility: Making high-poverty schools hunger free. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2013.

# GENERATING BUY-IN

## MESSAGING FOR DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

### SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

- Streamlines meal-service operations
- Fewer visits to the nurse's office
- Eliminates stigma and lunch-shaming practices

### FOOD SERVICE STAFF

- Increases participation in meal programs
- Eliminates unpaid meal balances
- Improves program efficiency

### FAMILIES

- Children get two free nutritious meals every day at school
- Reduces the financial burden for families to reload children's meal accounts

### STUDENTS

- School meals provide the building blocks for a student's ability to learn
- Youth who eat breakfast show improved cognitive function, attention and memory
- Research shows that school meals reduce food insecurity, obesity rates and poor health [3]
- Students won't be shamed for a lack of lunch money

[3] <http://www.frac.org/programs/national-school-lunch-program/benefits-school-lunch>

# BEST PRACTICES TO INCREASE ISP THROUGH SNAP ENROLLMENT

Is your school eligible or near eligible to participate in CEP? Check the Colorado Department of Education's [Community Eligibility Provision](#) page to get the most recent data with your school or LEAs identified student percentage.

- More than 100 schools in Colorado participated in CEP in 2018
- 18 school districts have at least one participating school
- Identified Student Percentages of participating schools range from 23 percent to 83 percent

SNAP participation is one proxy to ISP. Colorado ranks 43rd in the nation for access to food stamps, with only 60 percent of low-income Coloradans getting the nutritious food they need, which falls below the national average of 73 percent for enrollment. Learn about enrollment rates in your county at [hungerfreecolorado.org/impact-reports/](https://hungerfreecolorado.org/impact-reports/).

Increasing SNAP enrollment for low-income populations can help your school become eligible for CEP, or increase your reimbursement rate.

While this toolkit does not focus on Provision 2, increased SNAP enrollment also supports the school in expanding the number of families that qualify for free meals. Students enrolled in SNAP are Directly Certified for free meals. Provision 2 requires that the school serve meals to participating children at no charge but reduces application burdens to once every 4 years and simplifies meal counting and claiming procedures by allowing a school to receive meal reimbursement based on claiming percentages.

Here are some strategies to increase SNAP usage.

## SCHOOL-SPECIFIC SNAP OUTREACH PRACTICES

- Participate in Hunger Free Colorado's School Meal Application Referral program, in which families self-select to be contacted by Hunger Free Colorado's Food Resource Hotline. The hotline is a free "one-stop" resource for all food resources and SNAP application assistance.

**STEP 2. OPTIONAL** Does your family receive Food Stamps (SNAP), Monetary Assistance (TANF), or FDPIR? If yes, please add case number starting with 1B. Medicaid is **NOT** a qualifier for Free and Reduced meals.

After adding case number, you can sign and date application and return it to school cafeteria, school secretary or Nutrition Services.

1	B										
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<p>MEDICAID AND/OR STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (SCHIP) - The information provided in the application may be shared with Medicaid or SCHIP offices to seek enrollment of children into the above programs. You are not required to consent to the disclosure of this information. This will not affect your student(s)' eligibility for school meals.</p> <p>Your information <u>WILL</u> be shared unless you check this box:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Please do not share my information with the Medicaid or SCHIP Offices.</p>
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Check this box if you would like Hunger Free Colorado to call you regarding SNAP and food resources in your area.

- Train a school staff member to do SNAP Application Assistance in person, through Hunger Free Colorado's Hunger Free Students program. Contact Hunger Free Colorado at [info@hungerfreecolorado.org](mailto:info@hungerfreecolorado.org) to learn more.

- Generate broad-based community buy-in to enroll more families in SNAP.

- Provide SNAP Application Assistance.

- Referral programs with Health Care Providers
- Referral programs through the FRL application
- Referral programs through School Nurses, Homeless Liaison

- Increase Outreach through Coalition Building.

- Partner with your local county SNAP and WIC offices.
- Focus groups with community members impacted by hunger to learn why low-income community members are not enrolled in SNAP.
- Form a group of invested people from different sectors.

## Learn about Barriers through a Listening Tour

- Ask about SNAP enrollment in the area
- Keep notes with major themes

## Build Partnerships

- Reach out to community based organizations that could refer families to SNAP.
- Disseminate information about CEP through local institutions, such as churches and clinics.

### CONSIDER:

- Medical partners
- WIC Offices
- Libraries
- Rec Centers
- Faith Institutions
- Local nonprofits

# INCREASE DIRECT CERTIFICATION RATES

## MATCHING NAMES FOR DIRECT CERTIFICATION

**BARRIER:** Occasionally, a student's name on file doesn't match the name listed in the Direct Certification list.

**SOLUTION:** Ensure that all school forms ask for the legal names of all students and family members, that way they match the name associated with a SNAP case number.

Create a strong communications plan with your district. Involve community at every step.

## EDUCATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM

There might be confusion about the new program, especially if there are children in multiple schools and not all participate in CEP. Be sure to send home targeted information about how CEP works, and which schools are participating.

# HOW TO APPLY FOR CEP

Once you have worked to increase your ISP to above 40 percent (ideally close to 62.5 percent or higher, if possible) head over to the Colorado Department of Education's [Community Eligibility Provision](#) page for resources including: the CEP Planning and Implementation Guide, an Implementation Webinar, FAQs and more.

For questions regarding eligibility, contact Benjamin Wetherbee at [Wetherbee\\_B@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Wetherbee_B@cde.state.co.us) or 303-866-6529.

For questions regarding SNAP outreach and School Engagement, contact Hunger Free Colorado at [info@hungerfreecolorado.org](mailto:info@hungerfreecolorado.org) or 720-328-1284.



