



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

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DATE: June 12, 2014

MEMO CODE: SP 50-2014

SUBJECT: Extension of the Deadline for Local Educational Agencies to
Submit Applications to Elect the Community Eligibility Provision

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

One important goal of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) is to ensure every American child has access to the nutrition they need to grow into healthy adults. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a powerful tool to ensure children in low income communities have access to healthy meals at school. As noted in the February 2014 letter to program stakeholders from Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack and Secretary of Education Duncan, CEP allows participating high-poverty schools to offer healthy free lunches and breakfasts to all students without requiring their families to complete individual applications. Once initial eligibility and claiming percentages are established under CEP, they are guaranteed for four school years. There are approximately 3,000 local educational agencies (LEAs) and more than 22,000 schools that are eligible for CEP. CEP has the potential to offer over 8 million low-income children free meals each school day.

Participation in CEP is a local decision and offers several benefits for schools. Currently, ten States and the District of Columbia participate in CEP. Initial evaluations demonstrate that participating schools have increased participation in their lunch and breakfast programs, and experienced revenue gains and decreased administrative costs. And as described in the January 2014 Department of Education guidance, schools have a range of options for implementing Title I requirements while also participating in CEP. Beginning School Year (SY) 2014-2015, eligible LEAs and schools in all States may elect to participate in CEP. Pursuant to HHFKA, LEAs have until June 30, 2014, to elect to utilize this innovative provision in SY 2014-2015.

FNS recognizes that many LEAs may need additional time to consider and apply for CEP. Accordingly, FNS is extending the deadline for LEAs to elect to participate in CEP in SY 2014-2015 until **August 31, 2014**. State agencies must accept any LEA elections submitted on or before that date. In addition, FNS strongly encourages State agencies to accept elections received after August 31, 2014, where appropriate and feasible to do so.

Regional Directors

State Directors

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There are several resources available on the FNS website to assist LEAs with the decision to elect CEP. The CEP webpage (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/community-eligibility-provision>) includes the Department of Education Title I Guidance, Q & A guidance, and tools to assist LEAs as they consider implementing this important provision. FNS strongly encourages those schools and LEAs who have yet to elect CEP to review these resources and carefully consider the positive impact that CEP can have in their communities.

FNS is committed to providing healthy school meals to all of America's school children. Reaching our most vulnerable students through CEP provides equal access to nutritious meals while also lowering administrative costs for schools. CEP benefits our children, our schools and our communities. FNS stands ready to work closely with State agencies to ensure that eligible schools and LEAs can take advantage of CEP and increase access to school meals in low-income communities.

State agencies should distribute this memorandum to their LEAs as soon as possible. State agencies may direct any questions concerning this guidance to the appropriate FNS Regional Office. FNS is committed to serving as a resource to State agencies as schools and LEAs consider CEP in the upcoming months. We look forward to continuing to work with you on improving the nutrition of our Nation's children.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cynthia Long
Deputy Administrator
Child Nutrition Programs