

ESSA Quick Reference Brief: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) and Title I-A

What is the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)?

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is a meal service option that allows schools and school districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to **all** enrolled students without the burden of certifying students for meal benefits. Schools that adopt the CEP are reimbursed using a formula based on the percentage of students who are normally certified for free school meals, without an application.



A school may elect for CEP if at least 40 percent of its students are “directly certified,” or otherwise identified for free meals through means other than household applications. **Identified students** includes students directly certified through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); children experiencing housing instability and are identified for McKinney-Vento services, including unaccompanied youth; children in Head Start programs; migrant youth; and students who are enrolled

after an authorized official submits an application on their behalf. Students in foster who are certified through means other than a household application are also included.

Title I-A Requirements

The intent of Title I-A is to provide sufficient funds to schools with the highest percentages of children from families experiencing poverty, so that students are able to meet Oregon’s academic standard. In order to determine which schools will receive Title I-A funds, each district must put its schools in rank order from highest to lowest concentrations of children from families experiencing poverty.¹ ESEA identifies the measures which districts may use²:

1. Census counts of children from families below the poverty level (this is the same data used by the federal government to allocate Title I-A funds to districts);
2. Counts of children eligible for free and reduced-price school meals;
3. Counts of children whose families receive assistance under TANF;
4. Counts of children eligible for Medicaid (Oregon Health Plan); or
5. A combination of two or more of these data sources.



Using CEP Data in the Rank and Serve Process

Districts receiving Title I-A funds must rank and serve their schools based on the percentage of children from families experiencing poverty, and Federal Law provides districts with [multiple options to determine that percentage](#). For districts with CEP schools, their “identified student percentage,” or ISP, can be used for this purpose. Three options for using CEP data are described below.

- **Option 1:** All school poverty numbers are determined based on the number of identified students, regardless of the school’s CEP status. The total number of identified students in each school divided by the total enrollment in that school determines the ISP.

¹ ESEA Section 1113(a)(3)

² ESEA Section 1113(a)(5)(A)

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- **Option 2: All schools apply the 1.6 “multiplier.”** All schools follow the same process as in Option 1, but multiply the ISP by 1.6. Because this method will increase the poverty percentage at all schools, when using this option it is important to keep in mind that **any school with a poverty level of 75% or above must be served in rank order, regardless of grade span.**
- **Option 3: Apply the 1.6 multiplier to the number of identified students in CEP schools and use free and reduced-price meal data for non-CEP schools.** In this method, different data is used for CEP and non-CEP schools. To account for the difference in poverty rates when using free and reduced-price meals data for non-CEP schools and eligible student data for CEP schools, the multiplier of 1.6 is intended to approximate the free and reduced-price meals count for a CEP school.

Recommendations for Practice

- **Ensure ongoing communication.** Collaboration between district nutrition services staff and federal program staff is central to ensuring a common understanding of the role of CEP in the Title I-A rank and serve process. Consider regularly scheduled meetings between staff to ensure the timely sharing of data.
- **Examine your practice.** Has your district used the same method to rank and serve schools for the last few years? Consider examining other options to determine what best reflects student needs.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Can community eligibility impact a school district’s Title I funding?** CEP does not impact the amount of Title I funding that a district receives because the funding is based on child poverty data from the U.S. census, not free and reduced-price (FRP) meal applications.
2. **If a district has all CEP schools, does it need to apply the 1.6 multiplier for Title I ranking and allocation purposes?** No. If an LEA has all CEP schools, under ESEA section 1113(a)(3) through (5), the LEA may rank its schools by the percentage of directly certified students in each school, even though the multiplier is used to determine the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) school meals reimbursement.

Resources

- [Within District Allocations under Title I-A](#) (USED)
- [CEP under Title I, Part A](#) (USED)
- [CEP Planning and Implementation Guidance](#) (USDA)
- [Community Eligibility web page](#) (Office of Child Nutrition, ODE)
- [School Meal Programs Communications Toolkit](#) (Office of Child Nutrition, ODE)
- [ESSA Quick Reference Brief: Rank and Serve under Title I-A](#) (ODE)

Contacts

- For questions regarding CEP eligibility, contact [Jon Mabale](#) in the Office of Child Nutrition
- For questions regarding the use of CEP data in ranking Title I-A schools, contact
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