

COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND LEARNING

In **DELAWARE**, approximately **44,000** children live in food-insecure households, jeopardizing their health and well-being.¹

School meal programs combat food insecurity by providing millions of children with the nutrition they need to learn and thrive.

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) is an option within the school meal programs that increases students' access to nutritious food by allowing schools and school districts serving large numbers of children from families with low incomes to offer meals at no charge to all students.

How CEP Schools Are Reimbursed

Rather than relying on school meal applications to determine a school's federal reimbursements, CEP schools are reimbursed based on the share of students who are automatically eligible for free school meals without an application because they meet specific criteria, such as being in foster care or participating in certain federal means-tested programs, including SNAP. Schools can adopt CEP if at least 25 percent of students meet these criteria. The more students who are automatically eligible for free school meals, the more federal reimbursement CEP schools receive.

CEP Is a Win for Students, Families, and Schools

CEP provides all students access to the balanced school breakfasts and lunches they need to be well-nourished and ready to learn, while reducing the stigma often present in school cafeterias when schools have to track students' eligibility for free, reduced-price, and paid meals.

When students have access to free meals at school, families have lower grocery bills and more money in their household budgets to help make ends meet.

CEP makes school meal operations more efficient and effective for schools and districts. CEP eliminates the administrative burden associated with school meal applications, strengthens program integrity, and supports school nutrition finances by eliminating school meal debt and increasing participation in school breakfast and lunch programs, which allows for economies of scale.

In the 2024–2025 school year, 74 percent of eligible schools nationwide adopted CEP. These 54,000 schools reached more than 27 million students around the country.



In the 2024–2025 school year:

159 SCHOOLS

in **DELAWARE** adopted CEP. An additional **22** schools were eligible to adopt CEP but did not participate.

THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) CUTS

recently enacted in H.R. 1 will **exacerbate food insecurity** and have ripple effects for the school meal programs, including threatening schools' ability to implement CEP.

As children lose access to SNAP, their automatic eligibility for free school meals is severed and federal reimbursement for meals served in CEP schools decreases, jeopardizing the program's financial viability.

In **DELAWARE**, during the 2024–2025 school year:



98,101

children ate a school lunch and **57,056** children ate a school breakfast on an average school day.²



24

school districts adopted CEP for some or all schools. An additional **4** school districts had schools that were eligible to adopt CEP but did not participate.



80,610

children attended schools that adopted CEP.

By repealing SNAP cuts and investing in CEP, policymakers can reduce barriers that keep eligible children from receiving free school meals and help families afford to put food on the table.

¹ Analysis of 2021–2023 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, rounded to the nearest 1,000. The data for this analysis was pooled across multiple years to ensure adequate sample sizes for every state. As a result, cross-state comparisons using multiple fact sheets may cover different time periods.

² Average daily participation data for school breakfast and lunch are reflective of April 2025. U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2025). State-level table current activity. Accessed September 24, 2025. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>

The following table identifies the school districts in each of **DELAWARE'S** congressional districts that contain CEP-eligible and participating schools, as well as the number of children enrolled in CEP schools for the 2024–2025 school year.³

School District	Number of CEP-Eligible Schools	Number of CEP-Participating Schools	Students Enrolled in CEP-Participating Schools
At-Large Congressional District			
ACADEMIA ANTONIA ALONSO	1	1	806
ACADEMY OF DOVER	1	1	354
APPOQUINIMINK -9529000190	1	0	
ASPIRA DELAWARE	2	2	1,330
BRANDYWINE SCHOOL DISTRICT	15	14	8,508
CAESAR RODNEY SCHOOL DISTRICT	16	16	8,496
CAMPUS COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL	1	1	395
CAPE HENLOPEN SCHOOL DISTRICT	3	1	365
CAPITAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	14	14	6,796
CHARTER SCHOOL OF NEW CASTLE	1	1	735
CHRISTINA SCHOOL DISTRICT	31	31	13,138
COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	15	15	9,098
COMMUNITY EDUCATION BUILDING	4	4	1,441
DELAWARE ADOLESCENT PROGRAM INC. (DAPI)	2	2	32
EARLY COLLEGE SCHOOL AT DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY--9604000000	1	0	
EAST SIDE CHARTER	1	1	441
HARVEST CHRISTIAN ACADEMY	1	1	28
INDIAN RIVER - 9536000020	11	0	
LAKE FOREST SCHOOL DISTRICT	6	6	3,762
LAUREL SCHOOL DISTRICT	5	5	2,599
MILFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT	6	6	4,674
NEW CASTLE COUNTY VOTECH - 9538000100	3	0	

School District	Number of CEP-Eligible Schools	Number of CEP-Participating Schools	Students Enrolled in CEP-Participating Schools
RED CLAY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT	21	21	10,371
SEAFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT	6	6	3,342
SERVIAM GIRLS ACADEMY	1	1	38
SMYRNA SCHOOL DISTRICT	5	2	895
SUSSEX MONTESSORI CHARTER SCHOOL	1	1	377
WOODBIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT	6	6	2,589