

COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND LEARNING

In **MONTANA**, approximately **26,000** 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:

250 SCHOOLS

in **MONTANA** adopted CEP. An additional **317** 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 **MONTANA**, during the 2024–2025 school year:

 **75,689**

children ate a school lunch and **39,704** children ate a school breakfast on an average school day.²



79 school districts adopted CEP for some or all schools. An additional **116** school districts had schools that were eligible to adopt CEP but did not participate.



44,710 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 2022–2023 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 **MONTANA'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
Congressional District #1			
ALBERTON K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	148
ALDER-UPPER RUBY ELEM	1	0	
ANACONDA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	4	1,028
ARLEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	398
BELGRADE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
BIGFORK PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
BONNER ELEMENTARY	2	0	
BOZEMAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
BROWNING PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	7	1,850
BUTTE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7	7	3,777
CAYUSE PRAIRIE ELEMENTARY	1	0	
CHARLO PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	232
CLINTON ELEMENTARY	2	0	
COLUMBIA FALLS PUB SCHLS	4	4	2,265
CONRAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	0	
CORVALLIS K-12 SCHOOLS	4	0	
CUT BANK PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	0	
DARBY K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	329
DEER LODGE ELEMENTARY	4	0	
DEER PARK ELEMENTARY	1	0	
DESMET ELEMENTARY	2	2	128
DILLON ELEMENTARY	3	0	
DIXON ELEMENTARY	2	2	46
DRUMMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	185
EAST GLACIER PARK ELEM	1	1	47

School District	Number of CEP-Eligible Schools	Number of CEP-Participating Schools	Students Enrolled in CEP-Participating Schools
EUREKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	815
EVERGREEN ELEMENTARY	2	2	656
FORTINE ELEMENTARY	2	2	65
FRENCHTOWN K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
GALLATIN GATEWAY ELEM	1	0	
HAMILTON K-12 SCHOOLS	4	0	
HARRISON K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
HEART BUTTE K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	177
HELLGATE ELEMENTARY	4	0	
HOT SPRINGS K-12	3	3	169
KALISPELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS	15	15	6,689
KILA ELEMENTARY	2	0	
LIBBY K-12 SCHOOLS	3	0	
LIMA K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
LOLO ELEMENTARY	2	0	
LONE ROCK ELEMENTARY	2	0	
MARION ELEMENTARY	2	2	162
MISSOULA CO PUBLIC SCHLS	12	2	631
NOXON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	172
OLNEY-BISSELL ELEMENTARY	1	0	
PHILIPSBURG K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	177
PLAINS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	427
POLSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	4	1,622
POTOMAC ELEMENTARY	2	0	
RAMSAY ELEMENTARY	2	0	
RONAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	4	1,438

(continued)

NOTE: School districts, rather than individual schools, are listed under congressional districts. If a school district crosses congressional district boundaries, all of their schools and children are included in each congressional district. Not all school districts could be matched to congressional districts due to inconsistencies in how the data sources numerically identify and name school districts and schools. Unmatched school districts are listed as unassigned.

³ Food Research & Action Center. (2025). Community Eligibility Provision database for the 2024–2025 school year. <https://frac.org/community-eligibility-database/>. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Common core of data for the 2023–2024 school year. <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/files.asp>; and NCES. School district geographic relationship files for the 119th Congress. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/geographic/relationshipfiles>

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(continued)

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SEELEY LAKE ELEMENTARY	2	2	164
SHIELDS VALLEY PUB SCHLS	1	0	
SOMERS ELEMENTARY	2	0	
ST IGNATIUS K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	458
ST REGIS K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	186
STEVENSVILLE PUBLIC SCHLS	3	0	
SUPERIOR K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	334
SWAN RIVER ELEMENTARY	2	2	176
TARGET RANGE ELEMENTARY	2	0	
THOMPSON FALLS PUB SCHLS	3	3	485
THREE FORKS PUBLIC SCHLS	1	0	
TREGO ELEMENTARY	1	1	17
TROUT CREEK ELEMENTARY	2	2	26
TROY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	385
TWIN BRIDGES K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
VALIER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
VALLEY VIEW ELEMENTARY	1	0	
VICTOR K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	247
WHITEHALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
WILLOW CREEK PUBLIC SCHLS	3	0	
Congressional District #2			
ABSAROOKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
ARROWHEAD SCHOOLS	2	0	
ASHLAND ELEMENTARY	2	2	84
AUCHARD CREEK ELEMENTARY	1	0	
AUGUSTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	

School District	Number of CEP-Eligible Schools	Number of CEP-Participating Schools	Students Enrolled in CEP-Participating Schools
AYERS ELEMENTARY	1	0	
BAKER K-12 SCHOOLS	1	0	
BELFRY K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	58
BIG SANDY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
BILLINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	25	7	2,155
BOULDER ELEMENTARY	3	0	
BOX ELDER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	394
BRIDGER K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	208
BROADUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
BROADVIEW PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	181
BROCKTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	157
CANYON CREEK ELEMENTARY	2	0	
CASCADE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
CENTERVILLE PUBLIC SCHLS	3	0	
CHESTER-JOPLIN-INVERNESS PS	4	0	
CHINOOK PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	0	
CHOTEAU PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
CIRCLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	0	
CLANCY ELEMENTARY	1	0	
COLSTRIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
CONRAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	0	
CULBERTSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
CUSTER K-12 SCHOOLS	1	0	
DENTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
DODSON K-12	3	3	90
DUTTON/BRADY K-12 SCHOOLS	3	0	

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(continued)

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EAST HELENA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	0	
EKALAKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	0	
ELYSIAN ELEMENTARY	2	0	
FAIRVIEW PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
FORSYTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
FORT BENTON PUBLIC SCHLS	3	0	
FRAZER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	88
FROID PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	0	
FROMBERG K-12	3	3	79
FRONTIER ELEMENTARY	2	2	119
GERALDINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	0	
GEYSER K-12 SCHOOLS	1	0	
GILDFORD COLONY ELEM	1	0	
GLASGOW K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
GLENDEIVE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
GRASS RANGE PUBLIC SCHLS	1	0	
GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHLS	17	6	2,131
HARDIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6	6	1,710
HARLEM PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	622
HARLOWTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
HAVRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	5	1,804
HAYS-LODGE POLE K-12 SCHLS	3	3	265
HELENA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	10	4	1,186
HIGHWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
HINSDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
HOBSON K-12 SCHOOLS	3	0	

School District	Number of CEP-Eligible Schools	Number of CEP-Participating Schools	Students Enrolled in CEP-Participating Schools
HUNTLEY PROJECT K-12 SCHLS	3	0	
HYSHAM K-12 SCHOOLS	3	0	
JORDAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
JUDITH GAP PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	26
KING COLONY ELEMENTARY	1	0	
KIRCHER ELEMENTARY	1	0	
LAMBERT PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
LAME DEER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	578
LAUREL PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	3	642
LAVINA K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
LEWISTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	0	
LINCOLN K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	146
LIVINGSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	0	
LOCKWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	4	1,633
LODGE GRASS PUBLIC SCHLS	3	3	441
LUSTRE ELEMENTARY	2	0	
LUTHER ELEMENTARY	1	1	8
MALTA K-12 SCHOOLS	3	0	
MEDICINE LAKE K-12 SCHOOLS	3	0	
MELSTONE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	71
MILES CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	0	
MOORE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	0	
MORIN ELEMENTARY	1	1	37
NASHUA K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
NORTH STAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
OPHEIM K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	

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PLENTYWOOD K-12 SCHOOLS	1	0	
PLEVNA K-12 SCHOOLS	1	0	
POPLAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	4	823
POWER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
PRYOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	136
RED LODGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	0	
REED POINT PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
RICHEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1	0	
ROBERTS K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	107
ROCKY BOY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	3	548
ROSEBUD PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
ROUNDUP PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
ROY K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	31
RYEGATE K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	60
SACO PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
SHELBY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5	0	
SHEPHERD PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2	0	
SHIELDS VALLEY PUB SCHLS	1	0	
SIDNEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
STANFORD K-12 SCHOOLS	3	0	
SUN RIVER VALLEY PUB SCHLS	2	0	
SUNBURST K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	160
SWEET GRASS COUNTY HS	1	0	
TERRY K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
THREE FORKS PUBLIC SCHLS	1	0	
TOWNSEND K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	

School District	Number of CEP-Eligible Schools	Number of CEP-Participating Schools	Students Enrolled in CEP-Participating Schools
TURNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
ULM ELEMENTARY	2	0	
VALIER PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
VAUGHN ELEMENTARY	2	2	123
WESTBY K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
WHITE SUL SPGS PUB SCHLS	2	0	
WHITEHALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS	3	0	
WHITWATER K-12 SCHOOLS	2	0	
WIBAUX K-12 SCHOOLS	1	0	
WILLOW CREEK PUBLIC SCHLS	3	0	
WINIFRED K-12 SCHOOLS	3	0	
WINNETT K-12 SCHOOLS	3	3	66
WOLF CREEK ELEMENTARY	1	1	10
WOLF POINT PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4	4	725
WYOLA ELEMENTARY	2	2	60
ZURICH ELEMENTARY	1	1	28
Unassigned School Districts			
Not all school districts could be matched to congressional districts due to data inconsistencies			
MONT SCH FOR DEAF & BLIND	2	2	16
NKWUSM SCHOOL	1	1	52
NORTH CHEYENNE TRIB SCHOOLS	3	3	149
ST LABRE SCHOOLS	5	5	458
TWO EAGLE RIVER SCHOOLS	2	2	134

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