



# Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools

School Year 2018–2019

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This report was written by Alison Maurice; Randy Rosso; Crystal FitzSimons; and Kathryn Furtado. The findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of FRAC alone.

### About FRAC

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) is the leading national organization working for more effective public and private policies to eradicate domestic hunger and undernutrition. For more information about FRAC, or to sign up for FRAC's *Weekly News Digest* and monthly *Meals Matter: School Breakfast Newsletter*, visit [frac.org](http://frac.org).



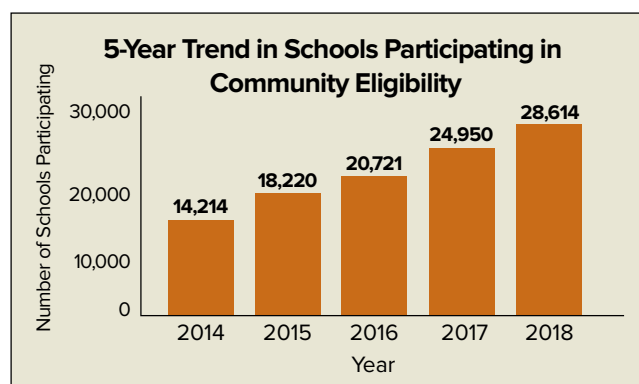
# Introduction

From the 2017–2018 school year to the 2018–2019 school year — the fifth year of nationwide availability — school participation in the Community Eligibility Provision grew by 14 percent since the 2017–2018 school year. Over 13.6 million children in 28,614 schools and 4,698 school districts are participating and have access to breakfast and lunch at no charge each school day through community eligibility.<sup>1</sup>

Community eligibility allows high-poverty schools and school districts to offer free meals to all students, and it eliminates the need for household school meal applications. A key piece of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, community eligibility was phased in a few states at a time before it was made available to schools nationwide in the 2014–2015 school year.

Schools that participate in community eligibility often see increased participation in school meals and a reduced paperwork burden, allowing school nutrition staff to focus more directly on offering healthy, appealing meals.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, offering meals at no charge to all students eliminates the stigma from the perception that school meals are only for low-income children, and facilitates the implementation of “breakfast after the bell” service models, such as breakfast in the classroom, which further boosts participation.

Since its introduction, community eligibility has been a popular option for high-needs schools, due to the many benefits for the school nutrition program and the entire school community. In the first year that community eligibility became available nationwide, 14,214 schools opted in, an impressively high take-up rate for a new school meals option. In the subsequent five years, participation has doubled to 28,614 schools, with 64.6 percent of all eligible schools participating. As more schools experience and share the academic, health, and administrative benefits of community eligibility, more school districts have chosen to adopt the provision or to expand its implementation each school year.



Still, there are many eligible schools that are not participating, even though they stand to benefit from community eligibility. Take-up rates vary substantially across the states. Several factors, including challenges associated with the loss of traditional school meal application data and low rates of direct certification (the latter being the foundation of community eligibility), have hindered widespread adoption in some states and school districts. However, barriers can be overcome with strong state, district, and school-level leadership, hands-on technical assistance from national, state, and local stakeholders, and peer-to-peer learning among districts.

This report provides an analysis of community eligibility implementation — nationally and for each state and the District of Columbia — in the 2018–2019 school year, and is based on three measures:

- the number of eligible and participating school districts and schools;
- the share of eligible districts and schools that have adopted community eligibility; and
- the number and share of eligible schools that are participating, based on the school’s poverty level.

As a companion to this report, the Food Research & Action Center has compiled all data collected in a [database of eligible and participating schools](#) that can be searched by state and school district.

<sup>1</sup>This report uses the term “school district” to refer to a Local Education Agency (LEA). LEAs include large school districts with hundreds of schools, as well as LEAs with charter schools where the school is often the only one in that LEA.

<sup>2</sup> Logan, C. W., Connor, P., Harvill, E. L., Harkness, J., Nisar, H., Checkoway, A., Peck, L. R., Shivji, A., Bein, E., Levin, M., & Enver, A. (2014). *Community Eligibility Provision Evaluation*. Available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/CEPEvaluation.pdf>. Accessed on March 22, 2019.

## How Community Eligibility Works

Community eligibility schools are high-needs schools that offer breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge and use significant administrative savings to offset any additional costs, over and above federal reimbursements, of serving free meals to all. Instead of collecting school meal applications, community eligibility schools are reimbursed for a percentage of the meals served, using a formula based on the percentage of students participating in specific means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

There are many benefits that community eligibility provides to schools and families:

- Schools no longer collect, process, or verify school meals applications, saving significant time and administrative burdens.
- Schools do not need to track each meal served by fee category (free, reduced-price, paid), and instead report total meal counts.
- School nutrition staff do not need to collect fees from students who are eligible for reduced-price or paid school meals, allowing students to move through the cafeteria line faster and ensuring that more children can be served.
- Offering meals at no charge to all students eliminates stigma from any perception that the school meals programs are just for the low-income children, thus increasing participation among all students.
- Schools no longer have to deal with unpaid school meal debt for reduced-price and paid students at the end of the school year or follow up with families when students do not have money to pay for meals.

### How Schools can Participate

Any district, group of schools in a district, or a school with 40 percent or more “identified students” is eligible to participate. Identified students are comprised of students certified for free school meals without an application. This includes

- children directly certified for free school meals through data matching because their households receive SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on

Indian Reservations (FDPIR) benefits, and in some states, Medicaid benefits; and

- children who are certified for free school meals without an application because they are homeless, migrant, runaway, enrolled in Head Start, or in foster care.

School districts may choose to participate school-by-school, districtwide, or group schools at their discretion if the school, school district, or group has an overall identified student percentage of 40 percent or higher.

Identified students whose poverty is shown by participation in other programs, are a subset of those eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. This is a smaller group than the total number of children who would be certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals if school meal applications were collected. For that reason, a multiplier (discussed below) is applied to the identified student percentage. Schools that qualify for community eligibility typically have free and reduced-price percentages of 65–70 percent or higher if traditional school meal applications were collected from student households.

### How Schools are Reimbursed

Although all meals are offered at no charge to all students in schools that participate in community eligibility, federal reimbursements are based on the proportion of low-income children in the school. The identified student percentage is multiplied by 1.6 to calculate the percentage of meals reimbursed at the federal free rate, and the remainder are reimbursed at the lower paid rate. The 1.6 multiplier was determined by Congress to reflect the ratio of six students certified for free or reduced-price meals with an application for every 10 students certified for free meals without an application. This serves as a proxy for the percentage of students that would be eligible for free and reduced-price meals if the school districts had collected school meal applications. For example, a school with 50 percent identified students would be reimbursed for 80 percent of the meals eaten at the free reimbursement rate ( $50 \times 1.6 = 80$ ), and 20 percent at the paid rate.

# Key Findings for the 2018–2019 School Year

## School District Participation

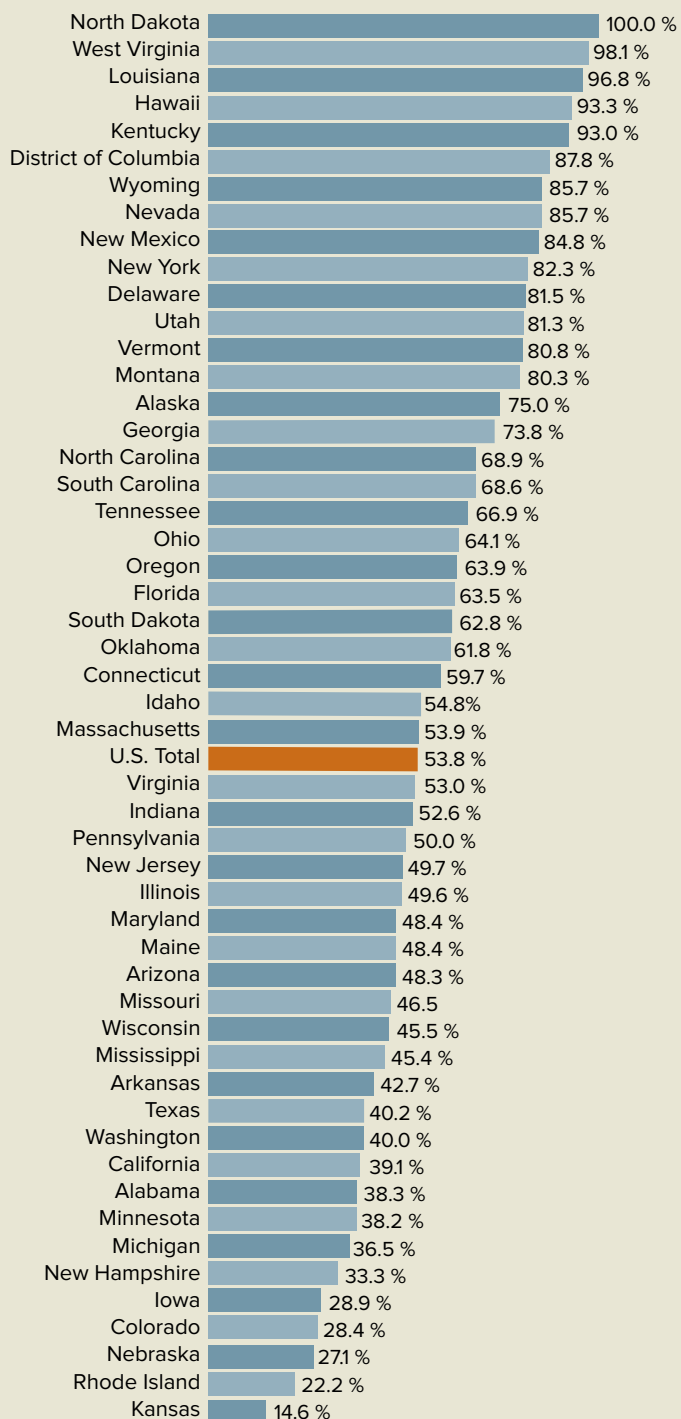
Nationally, 4,698 school districts — 53.8 percent of those eligible — are now participating in the Community Eligibility Provision in one or more schools.<sup>3</sup> This is an increase of 696 school districts since the 2017–2018 school year, when 4,002 school districts participated.

The median state’s take-up rate in school year 2018–2019 for eligible school districts is 54.8 percent; however, school district take-up rates across the states vary significantly, from 30 percent or lower in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Rhode Island, to over 90 percent in Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, North Dakota, and West Virginia.

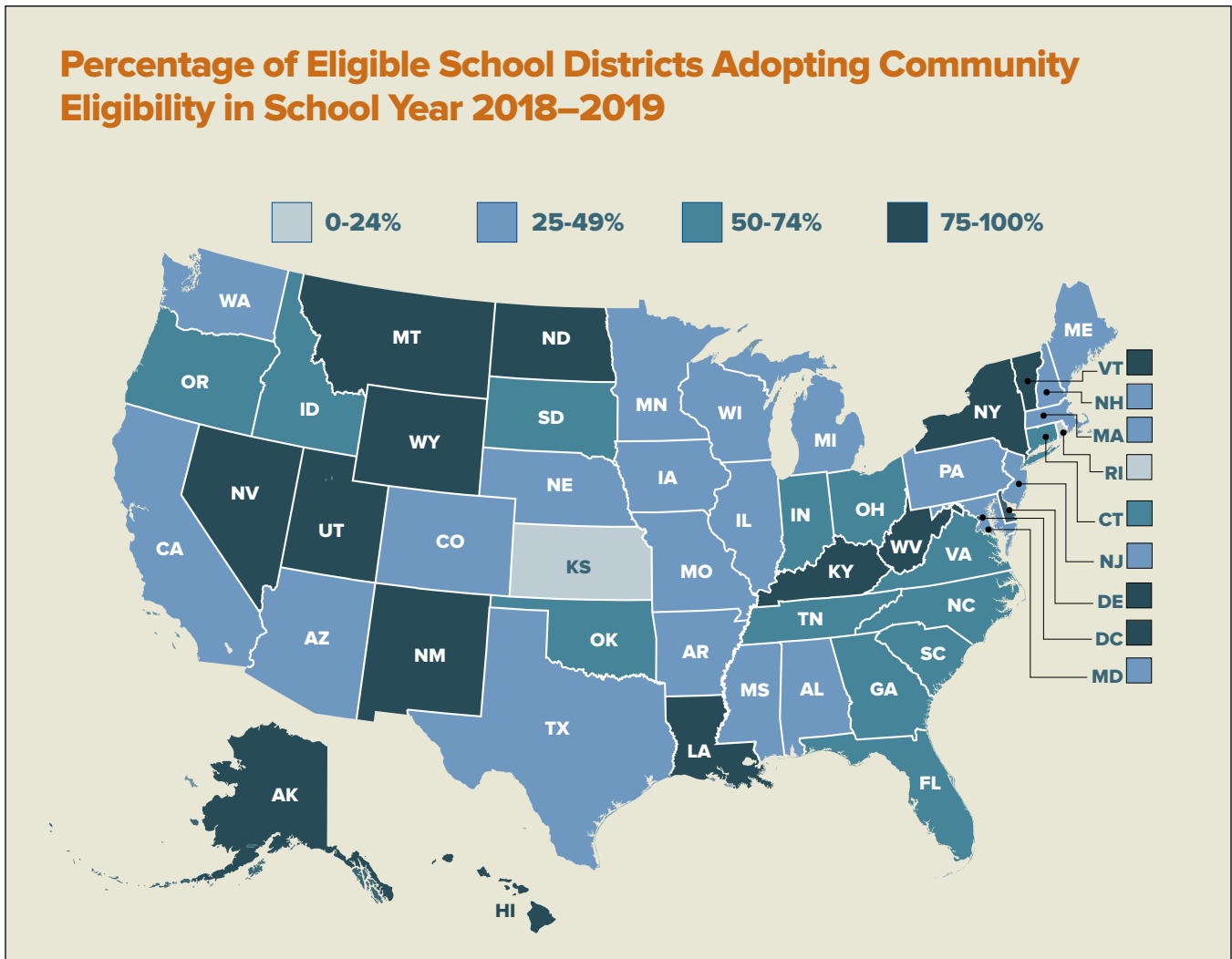
Several states have seen significant increases in the 2018–2019 school year. California experienced the largest growth in the number of school districts participating, increasing by 188 school districts. New York and Texas followed in school district participation growth by adding 87 and 88 school districts, respectively. In fact, all but five states and the District of Columbia have increased or maintained the number of school districts implementing community eligibility in the 2018–2019 school year. Of those that have decreased the number of school districts participating in community eligibility, Ohio has had the largest decrease — 10 school districts. Tennessee decreased by nine school districts, and the District of Columbia, Mississippi, and Missouri all decreased by four or fewer school districts in the 2018–2019 school year compared to the 2017–2018 school year.

<sup>3</sup> Under federal law, states are required to publish a list of school districts that are eligible for the Community Eligibility Provision districtwide, as well as a list of individual schools that are eligible, by May 1 annually. For more information on requirements related to the published lists, see <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP11-2018os.pdf>.

## Percentage of Eligible School Districts Adopting Community Eligibility School Year 2018–2019



## Percentage of Eligible School Districts Adopting Community Eligibility in School Year 2018–2019



One factor in the continued growth in participation is the ability of school districts to observe the benefits of community eligibility in other school districts. As more school districts overcome the perceived barrier that community eligibility will change Title I funding allocations dramatically, and those in states that require alternative income applications for state education funding and other purposes work through the challenges of collecting alternative income applications, more school districts have been adopting this provision. (See page 13 for best practices for navigating the loss of school meal applications.)

Despite the growth in the 2018–2019 school year, states need to continue to invest in improving their direct

certification systems to ensure that school districts can maintain the identified student percentages necessary to become and remain eligible for community eligibility, and to ensure that it continues to be a viable financial option for school districts. In the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s latest [report on state direct certification rates of children](#), 23 states did not meet the required benchmark of directly certifying 95 percent of children living in households that participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for free school meals, pointing to missed opportunities for school districts to increase their identified student percentages to facilitate easier community eligibility implementation. (See page 11 for best practices for directly certifying children.)

## School Participation

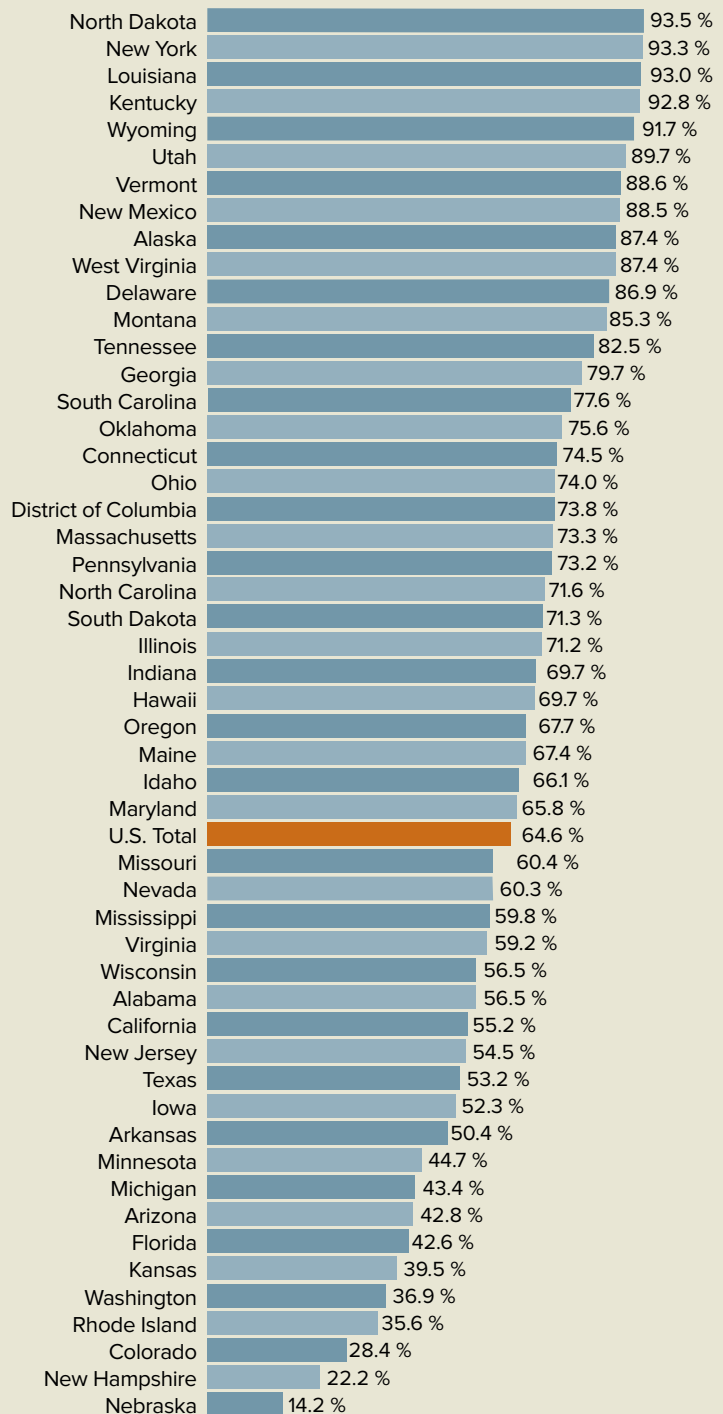
In the 2018–2019 school year, there are **28,614** schools participating in community eligibility, including schools from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Overall school participation in community eligibility increased by **3,664** schools since the 2017–2018 school year. In the 2018–2019 school year, **64.6 percent** of all eligible schools are participating in community eligibility nationally, with a median state take-up rate of **68.3 percent**.

Among the states, the percentage of eligible and participating schools varies significantly. Thirteen states have 80 percent or more of their eligible schools participating, and 9 more states and the District of Columbia had take-up rates of over 70 percent.

Forty-one states have seen an increase in the number of schools participating in community eligibility, and three states — Maryland, Nebraska, and Ohio — maintained the same number of community eligibility schools during the 2018–2019 school year. Twenty-five of these states have strong direct certification systems and are meeting the required direct certification benchmark.

All but seven states — Alaska, Idaho, Montana, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, and Vermont — have seen growth or maintained the number of participating schools in the 2018–2019 school year. California has had the largest increase, with 1,522 more schools implementing community eligibility since the 2017–2018 school year. Florida, Michigan, New York, and Texas added 214, 173, 184 and 646 more schools, respectively. Smaller states with fewer eligible schools also have made strong progress, including Maine, which increased by 16 schools, and Utah, which added 17 schools.

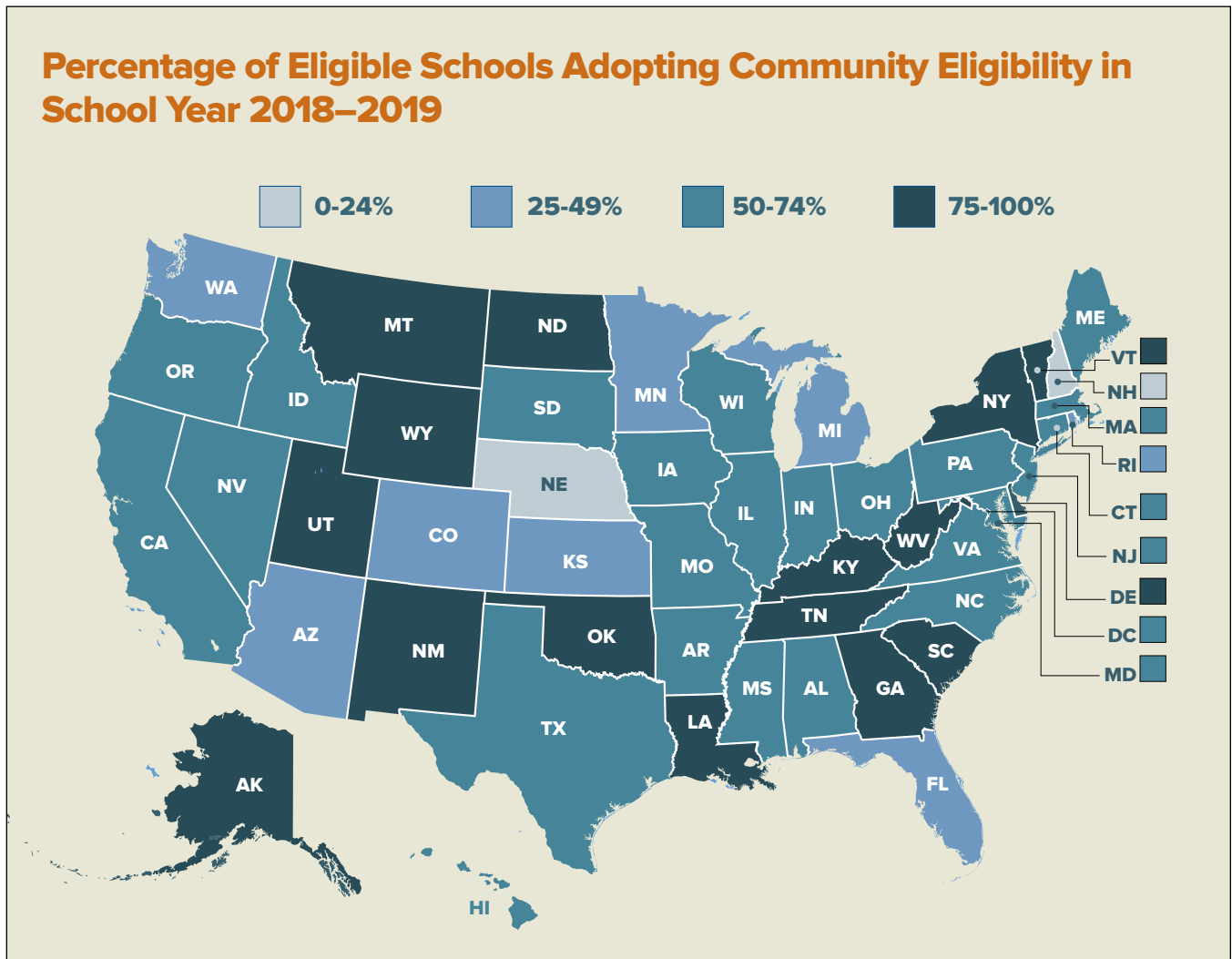
## Percentage of Eligible Schools Adopting Community Eligibility School Year 2018–2019



Despite significant growth nationally and across many states, some states still have very low take-up rates compared to the national average. In 10 states, less than 45 percent of all eligible schools are participating in community eligibility. In particular, Colorado, Nebraska, and New Hampshire have the lowest take-up rates for eligible schools, with less than 1 in 3 eligible

schools participating. For some states with low school participation rates, improvement to direct certification systems at the state and school district level can help increase the number of schools eligible for the provision by more accurately identifying the number of students automatically eligible to receive free school meals without a school meals application.

## Percentage of Eligible Schools Adopting Community Eligibility in School Year 2018–2019

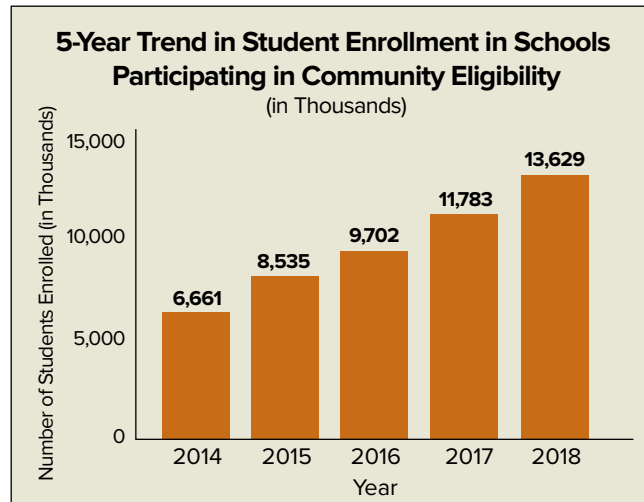




## Student Enrollment

The true impact of community eligibility is most evident in the number of students impacted — in the 2018–2019 school year, over 13.6 million students are offered free breakfast and lunch at school through the Community Eligibility Provision. This is up from more than 11.8 million in the 2017–2018 school year and 9.7 million in the 2016–2017 school year. California is the state with the most children — nearly 1.7 million — attending community eligibility schools. Nationally, approximately 1 in 8 students attending a community eligibility school lives in California.

All but nine states have seen increases in the number of students in community eligibility schools. As would be expected, the states that have seen the biggest increases in the number of participating schools this



year also have seen the largest enrollment increases. In addition to California, which added more than 891,000 students, Texas had a significant increase in the number of children in community eligibility schools, adding nearly 382,000 students. Florida also added more than 150,000 additional students in participating schools, and nine other states have increased enrollment in community eligibility schools by over 20,000 students.

### Community Eligibility and Breakfast After the Bell

School breakfast serves just 57 low-income students for every 100 that participate in school lunch.<sup>4</sup> One reason that this participation rate is lower than it should be is that most schools offer school breakfast in the cafeteria before the school day starts. Implementing an innovative school breakfast model, like breakfast in the classroom or “grab and go” breakfast, makes the meal more accessible to students, and has been shown to increase school breakfast participation significantly. Participation also increases when breakfast is offered at no charge to all students. Combining the two approaches yields the largest increase in participation. Under community eligibility, offering breakfast for free and reducing administrative requirements by no longer requiring schools to collect fees or count each meal served by fee category makes it easier to start a breakfast in the classroom or “grab and go” program.

<sup>4</sup>Food Research & Action Center. (2019). *School Breakfast Scorecard School Year 2017–2018*. Available at: <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/school-breakfast-scorecard-sy-2017-2018.pdf>. Accessed on March 26, 2019.

## School Participation by Poverty Level

While all schools that qualify for community eligibility are considered to be high needs, a school’s ability to implement community eligibility successfully — and maintain financial viability — typically improves when its identified student percentage is higher. For this report, the Food Research & Action Center examined the number of schools participating in each state, based on their identified student percentages as a proxy for the school’s poverty level.

Schools with higher identified student percentages receive the free reimbursement rate for more meals, which makes community eligibility a more financially viable option. As a result, schools with identified student percentages of 60 percent and above — those that receive the free reimbursement rate for 100 percent or nearly 100 percent of their meals — are more likely to participate in community eligibility than schools with lower identified student percentages; that has been the case since the program became available

nationwide. This year, the participation rate among schools with identified student percentages of 60 percent or more is significantly higher than the overall eligible school participation rate of 64.4 percent. Nationally, 80.4 percent of all schools with identified student percentages of 60 percent and above are participating in community eligibility. In 19 states, more than 90 percent of such schools are participating and nine additional states have more than 80 percent participating. This category of eligible schools with identified student percentages of 60 percent and above represents 17,540 schools or 61 percent of the 28,614 participating schools.

Still, many schools are participating at lower identified student percentages and this number has grown each year as schools gain a better understanding of the financial savings and educational and health benefits of community eligibility. In the 2018–2019 school year, 2,114 community eligibility schools, which is almost 7 percent of all schools participating in community eligibility, have an identified student percentage between 40 and 50 percent, and 7,797 schools — or 27 percent — have an identified student percentage between 50 and 60 percent.

### Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate by Schools' Identified Student Percentage for School Year 2018–2019\*

Identified Student Percentage	Eligible Schools	Adopting Schools	Percent Adopting CEP
40 to less than 50 percent	9,480	2,114	22.3 %
50 to less than 60 percent	11,909	7,797	65.5 %
60 percent and above	21,806	17,540	80.4 %

\*Some states reported ISPs for adopting schools that are below the 40 percent eligibility threshold. These participating schools are not included in the total number of adopting schools by each ISP category. This accounts for the difference between the U.S. total number of adopting schools and the total number of adopting schools by ISP category. For more information, see Table 3.

## Strategies to Make Community Eligibility Work at Lower Identified Student Percentages

Schools can increase the financial viability of implementing community eligibility at lower identified student percentages by maximizing federal child nutrition funding through strong participation in school breakfast and lunch and other federal child nutrition programs.

### Strategies include

- implementing breakfast in the classroom or another innovative school breakfast model to increase participation;
- participating in the [Afterschool Meal Program](#), through the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which provides the free reimbursement rate combined with commodities or cash in lieu of commodities for all suppers and lunches served;
- providing appealing and high-quality meals that offer a variety of options that include items prepared in-house, reflect students' cultural tastes, and incorporate locally sourced products;
- tracking daily participation to identify unpopular items and avoid menu fatigue, allowing districts to adjust menus quickly to ensure strong participation;
- engaging students through taste tests, student surveys, and student-run school gardens to encourage participation; and
- promoting school meals to students, parents, and the community-at-large by distributing information through social media about the availability of school meals at no charge, placing banners about the program throughout the school, running contests, and working with local media to highlight the program.

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## Factors Impacting Adoption of Community Eligibility

Five years into nationwide availability, numerous best practices and lessons have emerged that can benefit schools and school districts that are considering community eligibility, as well as states interested in increasing take-up rates in the coming school year. In most states, implementation of community eligibility has been relatively smooth, with participation growing each year as more districts and schools learn about its many benefits. Several factors have driven the expansion in successful states: effective outreach efforts and comprehensive technical support from state agency staff and advocacy organizations, often in partnership with each other; effective and efficient direct certification systems that have allowed schools to maximize the financial viability of community eligibility; and having clear policies for community eligibility schools on data to be used in place of school meal applications for purposes of allocating state education funding and other programs.

### Strong State Leadership

Many child nutrition agencies in states with high take-up rates of community eligibility have embraced the provision as a new opportunity to support students and schools. Kentucky, Montana, Oregon, and West Virginia are examples of states that have carried out robust outreach and education efforts to ensure that eligible schools are aware of community eligibility and that districts would not miss out on its benefits. Additionally, New York has taken recent steps to update the technology that is used for directly certifying students across the state, which helps school districts increase their identified student percentages, and Texas has developed state-specific tools to assist school districts with community eligibility implementation.

Since a number of state and federal education and other programs have traditionally relied upon schools' free and reduced-price meal eligibility data to allocate funding, state leadership can be beneficial in resolving issues that may arise as a result of schools no longer collecting this data through school meal applications. To address these challenges, leadership from the state superintendent of education or other public officials can be beneficial in helping overcome barriers and

encouraging cooperation among all stakeholders. Otherwise, schools in the state will remain uncertain of the implications of moving to community eligibility, resulting in fewer schools participating in the program.

### Direct Certification Rates

Community eligibility bases school breakfast and lunch reimbursements on the percentage of enrolled students who are certified for free school meals without an application, and direct certification is the key component of that, making direct certification the backbone of community eligibility. Direct certification allows school districts to certify automatically children who are enrolled in certain other public benefits programs as eligible for school meals through a data-matching process. The vast majority of “identified students” in community eligibility schools are students who are living in households that are participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and who have been directly certified through data matching at the state or local level. Under current federal law, school districts must perform at least three direct certification data matches each school year, and states must achieve a benchmark of directly certifying 95 percent of children who are living in SNAP households for free school meals.

In the latest [direct certification state implementation report](#), focused on the 2016–2017 school year, only 28 states achieved the benchmark. Ten states directly certified less than 90 percent of all children in SNAP households, with California, the lowest-performing state, certifying just 74 percent.<sup>5</sup>

Identified student counts also can include children who are directly certified because their household participates in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), or because they are in foster

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<sup>5</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2018). *Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program: State Implementation Progress Report to Congress — School Year 2015–2016 and School Year 2016–2017*. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/direct-certification-national-school-lunch-program-report-congress-state-implementation-progress-1>. Accessed on March 25, 2019.

care or Head Start or receive homeless, runaway, or migrant education services. States that can directly certify virtually all children in SNAP households, as well as expand their direct certification systems to include a variety of other data sources that can help school districts maximize their identified student percentage, help make community eligibility financially viable for more school districts and schools. Conversely, in states and school districts where direct certification rates are low and their data sources are less robust, a school's poverty likely is underrepresented by the identified student percentage. As a result, in these states, there will be fewer schools and districts that are eligible for community eligibility, resulting in fewer high-poverty schools adopting the provision, and some schools that do use community eligibility will receive less reimbursement than they should.

States can improve direct certification systems and support community eligibility schools by

- working with appropriate state agency counterparts to incorporate TANF, FDPIR, foster care, homeless, runaway, and migrant student data into state direct certification systems;
- increasing the frequency that school enrollment and program enrollment data are updated and matched against each other (weekly or in real time);
- improving algorithms to incorporate tiered or probabilistic matching to account for nicknames and common mistakes, such as inverted numbers in dates of birth or misspelled words;
- developing functionalities to provide partial matches that can be resolved at the local level, including search functions that allow schools to look for new students; and
- conducting SNAP education and offering SNAP application assistance to schools.

For more information on strategies to improve direct certification, read the Food Research & Action Center's [Direct Certification Improves Low-Income Student Access to School Meals](#).

## Medicaid Direct Certification

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 authorized demonstration projects to use Medicaid data for direct certification. The statute requires that students be enrolled in Medicaid and belong to a family whose income, as defined by Medicaid, is below 133 percent of the Federal Poverty Level<sup>6</sup> in order to use Medicaid data to directly certify a student to receive free school meals. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued a request for proposals for states to be included in a demonstration project that allowed direct certification for free and reduced-price school meals using Medicaid income data. All states participating in one of the Medicaid direct certification demonstrations continued to increase the number of schools participating in community eligibility or maintained the number of schools using the provision in the 2018–2019 school year.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to note that if a child can be directly certified for free school meals through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, or through foster care, Head Start, or through being migrant or homeless, that certification always will take precedence over Medicaid direct certification.

<sup>6</sup> As defined in section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)).

<sup>7</sup> The following states use Medicaid data, along with an income test, to determine categorical eligibility for free school meals: Illinois, Kentucky, New York, and Pennsylvania. The following states use Medicaid data to determine categorical eligibility for both free and reduced-price school meals: California, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

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## Measuring Student Poverty Without School Meal Applications

School meal application data (determining eligibility for free or reduced-price meals) has traditionally been used for a variety of purposes in education, as it has been a readily available proxy for poverty. When switching to community eligibility, schools no longer have individual student data because they no longer collect school meal applications. A school district's ability to navigate switching to new poverty measures for broader education funding purposes is often important in the school district being willing to implement community eligibility.

### Title I Funding

Title I Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides supplemental federal funding to school districts with high percentages of low-income students. Adopting community eligibility does not impact the amount of Title I funding a school district receives, but many districts allocate Title I funds to individual schools based on National School Lunch Program data (free and reduced-price certified students). In response to confusion regarding how school districts would measure poverty for the purposes of allocating Title I funding among schools, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Education worked closely together to establish policies for community eligibility schools to access federal programs without the need for individual student free and reduced-price eligibility data. The U.S. Department of Education policy guidance offers school districts numerous options for determining school-by-school Title I allocations, which allow districts to use the measure that works best for them.<sup>8</sup> For more information, read the Food Research & Action Center's [Understanding the Relationship Between Community Eligibility and Title I Funding](#).

### State Education Funding

Many state education funding formulas provide additional support to low-income students and their schools based on the student's eligibility for free or

reduced-price school meals. Since community eligibility schools no longer collect school meal applications, a number of these states have allowed community eligibility schools to use other data to determine state education funding. Nine states allow community eligibility school districts to measure poverty based on alternative data sources, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Medicaid, or Head Start. Eight states allow school districts to multiply their identified student percentage by 1.6, known as the "free claiming percentage" under community eligibility, as a proxy for free and reduced-price percentages in community eligibility schools.<sup>9</sup>

Eighteen states that use free and reduced-price school meal eligibility in their state education funding formulas have established a policy requiring school districts to collect household income data outside of the school meals program, either annually or every four school years. Collecting these alternative forms is a cost to the school district and also deters some schools from adopting community eligibility. These states can consider following the lead of the 16 states and the District of Columbia that have allowed other data to be used to determine state education funding and do not require the alternative form. Additionally, four states allow community eligibility schools to use its most recent free and reduced-price data. Twelve states do not use school meal data for the purposes of state education funding and therefore community eligibility implementation does not impact state funding in these states.

States that are unable to eliminate the use of the alternative income form can implement best practices to ease the burden of collecting the forms. These include collecting forms less frequently, such as once every four years; allowing school districts to incorporate income questions into school forms that are already collected; simplifying the state-required form to include only the information required for state funding purposes; and allowing school districts to collect the forms throughout the school year, as data are often used for the following school year.

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2016). Updated Title I Guidance for Schools Electing Community Eligibility (memo). Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/updated-title-i-guidance-schools-electing-community-eligibility>. Accessed on March 25, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> For additional state approaches, refer to [State Approaches in the Absence of Meal Applications](#), a chart by the Food Research & Action Center and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

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## Conclusion

Community eligibility offers an important opportunity for high-needs schools and districts to meet the needs of the many low-income families they serve. The option creates hunger-free schools by ensuring that students are well-nourished and ready to learn, and it allows school nutrition departments to use their resources to provide nutritious meals by streamlining administrative requirements. The more than 28,000 participating schools understand the countless benefits that community eligibility provides to students and schools. Community eligibility can help improve school nutrition programs; this is demonstrated by the reach

it has achieved in just five years. Still, there remain significant opportunities for growth in the coming school years — particularly in states and districts currently underutilizing the option. States and school districts need to work through remaining barriers, improve direct certification systems, offer opportunities for successful school districts to keep sharing their experiences with their peers, and assist school districts in expanding community eligibility to new schools as they become more comfortable with the provision and fully understand its social, health, and financial benefits.

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## Technical Notes

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) obtained information on schools that have adopted community eligibility from state education agencies or entities at the state level that administer the federal school nutrition programs. Between September 2018 and March 2019, FRAC collected these data:

- school name,
- school district name,
- identified student percentage (ISP),
- participation in community eligibility as an individual school, part of a group, or a whole district, and
- enrollment.

FRAC followed up with state education agencies for data clarifications and, when necessary, to obtain missing data.

Under federal law, states are required to publish, by May 1 of each year, a list of schools and districts with ISPs of at least 40 percent and those with ISPs between 30 and just under 40 percent (near-eligible schools and districts). FRAC compared these published lists to the lists of adopting schools, and compiled a universe of eligible and participating schools and districts in the 2017–2018 and 2018–2019 school years. When compiling the universe of eligible schools, FRAC treated a district as eligible if it contained at least one eligible school. FRAC treated a school as eligible if it appeared on a state’s published list of eligible schools. In addition, schools that were missing from a state’s list of eligible schools, but appeared on its list of adopting schools were treated as eligible.

There are two circumstances under which a school might be able to adopt community eligibility even if it did not appear on a state’s list of eligible schools:

1. The U.S. Department of Agriculture permitted states to base their May published lists on proxy data readily

available to them. Proxy data are merely an indicator of potential eligibility, not the basis for eligibility. Districts must submit more accurate information, which may be more complete, more recent, or both, when applying to adopt community eligibility.

2. A school can participate as a member of an adopting group (part or all of a district). A group’s eligibility is based on the ISP for the group as a whole.

The lists obtained from state education agencies indicated whether schools have elected to adopt community eligibility, the identified student percentage the schools use to determine the federal reimbursement for meals served, and the total number of students attending each adopting school. For most schools adopting community eligibility during the 2018–2019 school year, states provided group-level ISP data (except for one school in California, 42 schools in Maine, eight schools in Michigan, two schools in Minnesota, one school in Mississippi, two schools in Missouri, four schools in Montana, four schools in New Jersey, 36 schools in North Carolina, 998 schools in Ohio, six schools in Oregon, one school in South Carolina, three schools in Vermont, one school in Washington, two schools in West Virginia, and four schools in Wisconsin) and student enrollment numbers (except for four schools in Hawaii, 182 schools in Louisiana, seven schools in Michigan, 25 schools in Mississippi, 14 schools in South Carolina, and three schools in Utah).

For most schools adopting community eligibility in the 2017–2018 school year, states provided group-level ISP data for adopting schools (except for three schools in Georgia, 13 schools in Maine, 998 schools in Ohio, one school in Oklahoma, and 68 schools in Vermont) and student enrollment numbers (except for 12 schools in Alaska, 19 schools in Louisiana, four schools in Mississippi, five schools in Oklahoma, one school in South Carolina, and two schools in Vermont).

**TABLE 1: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate in School Districts<sup>1</sup> for School Years 2017–2018 and 2018–2019**

State	School Year 2017–2018			School Year 2018–2019		
	Eligible for CEP	Adopting CEP	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible	Eligible for CEP	Adopting CEP	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible
Alabama	120	42	35.0 %	120	46	38.3 %
Alaska	38	29	76.3 %	40	30	75.0 %
Arizona	316	127	40.2 %	317	153	48.3 %
Arkansas	169	58	34.3 %	150	64	42.7 %
California	411	103	25.1 %	744	291	39.1 %
Colorado	71	18	25.4 %	74	21	28.4 %
Connecticut	41	28	68.3 %	62	37	59.7 %
Delaware	27	18	66.7 %	27	22	81.5 %
District of Columbia	43	40	93.0 %	41	36	87.8 %
Florida	247	160	64.8 %	296	188	63.5 %
Georgia	157	104	66.2 %	145	107	73.8 %
Hawaii	21	17	81.0 %	60	56	93.3 %
Idaho	36	22	61.1 %	42	23	54.8 %
Illinois	379	239	63.1 %	498	247	49.6 %
Indiana	166	60	36.1 %	137	72	52.6 %
Iowa	49	19	38.8 %	76	22	28.9 %
Kansas	53	7	13.2 %	48	7	14.6 %
Kentucky	173	156	90.2 %	172	160	93.0 %
Louisiana	97	82	84.5 %	121	125	96.8 %
Maine	67	19	28.4 %	62	30	48.4 %
Maryland	29	14	48.3 %	31	15	48.4 %
Massachusetts	192	79	41.1 %	154	83	53.9 %
Michigan	341	192	56.3 %	712	260	36.5 %
Minnesota	179	65	36.3 %	170	65	38.2 %
Mississippi	121	60	49.6 %	130	59	45.4 %
Missouri	223	101	45.3 %	213	99	46.5 %
Montana	78	55	70.5 %	71	57	80.3 %
Nebraska	56	12	21.4 %	48	13	27.1 %
Nevada	14	10	71.4 %	14	56	85.7 %
New Hampshire	14	3	21.4 %	12	4	33.3 %
New Jersey	171	81	47.4 %	169	84	49.7 %
New Mexico	147	121	82.3 %	145	123	84.8 %
New York	450	293	65.1 %	462	380	82.3 %
North Carolina	153	102	66.7 %	148	102	68.9 %



**TABLE 1: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate in School Districts<sup>1</sup> for School Years 2017–2018 and 2018–2019**

State	School Year 2017–2018			School Year 2018–2019		
	Eligible for CEP	Adopting CEP	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible	Eligible for CEP	Adopting CEP	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible
North Dakota	24	19	79.2 %	21	21	100.0 %
Ohio	474	335	70.7 %	507	325	64.1 %
Oklahoma	329	126	38.3 %	204	126	61.8 %
Oregon	116	74	63.8 %	122	78	63.9 %
Pennsylvania	368	181	49.2 %	410	205	50.0 %
Rhode Island	24	5	20.8 %	27	6	22.2 %
South Carolina	84	55	65.5 %	86	59	68.6 %
South Dakota	58	26	44.8 %	43	27	62.8 %
Tennessee	154	102	66.2 %	139	93	66.9 %
Texas	680	241	35.4 %	818	329	40.2 %
Utah	15	9	60.0 %	16	13	81.3 %
Vermont	31	19	61.3 %	26	21	80.8 %
Virginia	87	50	57.5 %	117	62	53.0 %
Washington	153	66	43.1 %	180	72	40.0 %
West Virginia	55	50	90.9 %	53	52	98.1 %
Wisconsin	174	102	58.6 %	242	110	45.5 %
Wyoming	9	6	66.7 %	7	6	85.7 %
U.S. Total	7,684	4,002	52.1 %	8,729	4,698	53.8 %

<sup>1</sup>For the 2017–2018 school year data, school districts are defined as eligible if they include at least one school with an identified student percentage (ISP) of 40 percent or higher, or at least one school has already adopted community eligibility. For the 2018–2019 data, school districts are defined as eligible if they include at least one school with an ISP of 40 percent or higher, or at least one school has already adopted community eligibility.

**TABLE 2: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate in Schools<sup>1</sup> for School Years 2017–2018 and 2018–2019**

State	School Year 2017–2018			School Year 2018–2019		
	Eligible for CEP	Adopting CEP	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible	Eligible for CEP	Adopting CEP	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible
Alabama	793	425	53.6 %	786	444	56.5 %
Alaska	246	213	86.6 %	238	208	87.4 %
Arizona	870	296	34.0 %	870	372	42.8 %
Arkansas	437	178	40.7 %	399	201	50.4 %
California	2,409	1,311	54.4 %	5,136	2,833	55.2 %
Colorado	389	101	26.0 %	370	105	28.4 %
Connecticut	278	241	86.7 %	412	307	74.5 %
Delaware	137	116	84.7 %	137	119	86.9 %
District of Columbia	255	166	65.1 %	317	234	73.8 %
Florida	2,983	1,142	38.3 %	3,184	1,356	42.6 %
Georgia	1,102	787	71.4 %	1,026	818	79.7 %
Hawaii	105	65	61.9 %	101	69	68.3 %
Idaho	126	92	73.0 %	124	82	66.1 %
Illinois	1,793	1,499	83.6 %	2,163	1,541	71.2 %
Indiana	554	287	51.8 %	519	362	69.7 %
Iowa	215	123	57.2 %	298	156	52.3 %
Kansas	208	72	34.6 %	190	75	39.5 %
Kentucky	1,066	948	88.9 %	1,060	984	92.8 %
Louisiana	1,143	968	84.7 %	1,092	1,016	93.0 %
Maine	151	71	47.0 %	129	87	67.4 %
Maryland	367	242	65.9 %	368	242	65.8 %
Massachusetts	938	574	61.2 %	836	613	73.3 %
Michigan	1,044	715	68.5 %	2,046	888	43.4 %
Minnesota	380	154	40.5 %	365	163	44.7 %
Mississippi	515	342	66.4 %	686	410	59.8 %
Missouri	712	402	56.5 %	695	420	60.4 %
Montana	190	158	83.2 %	184	157	85.3 %
Nebraska	219	26	11.9 %	183	26	14.2 %
Nevada	258	153	59.3 %	277	167	60.3 %
New Hampshire	23	3	13.0 %	18	4	22.2 %
New Jersey	633	306	48.3 %	607	331	54.5 %
New Mexico	633	535	84.5 %	617	546	88.5 %
New York	3,806	3,381	88.8 %	3,822	3,565	93.3 %
North Carolina	1,401	914	65.2 %	1,232	882	71.6 %

**TABLE 2: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate in Schools<sup>1</sup> for School Years 2017–2018 and 2018–2019**

State	School Year 2017–2018			School Year 2018–2019		
	Eligible for CEP	Adopting CEP	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible	Eligible for CEP	Adopting CEP	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible
North Dakota	35	26	74.3 %	31	29	93.5 %
Ohio	1,313	998	76.0 %	1,348	998	74.0 %
Oklahoma	840	413	49.2 %	565	427	75.6 %
Oregon	463	344	74.3 %	504	341	67.7 %
Pennsylvania	1,328	959	72.2 %	1,408	1,031	73.2 %
Rhode Island	91	34	37.4 %	104	37	35.6 %
South Carolina	685	471	68.8 %	664	515	77.6 %
South Dakota	237	89	37.6 %	136	97	71.3 %
Tennessee	1,112	914	82.2 %	1,013	836	82.5 %
Texas	4,082	2,070	50.7 %	5,103	2,716	53.2 %
Utah	51	35	68.6 %	58	52	89.7 %
Vermont	87	68	78.2 %	70	62	88.6 %
Virginia	458	341	74.5 %	723	428	59.2 %
Washington	547	232	42.4 %	739	273	36.9 %
West Virginia	566	518	91.5 %	618	540	87.4 %
Wisconsin	577	422	73.1 %	775	438	56.5 %
Wyoming	15	10	66.7 %	12	11	91.7 %
U.S. Total	38,866	24,950	64.2 %	44,358	28,614	64.6 %

<sup>1</sup> For the 2017–2018 school year data, schools are defined as eligible for community eligibility if their identified student percentage (ISP) is 40 percent or higher, or if they adopted community eligibility. For the 2018–2019 school year data, schools are defined as eligible if they have an ISP of 40 percent or higher, or if they adopted community eligibility.

**TABLE 3: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate by Schools' ISP for School Year 2018–2019**

State	Total Schools Adopting CEP	Eligible Schools 40–<50% ISP	Adopting Schools 40–<50% ISP	Percent Adopting 40–<50% ISP	Eligible Schools 50–<60% ISP	Adopting Schools 50–<60% ISP	Percent Adopting 50–<60% ISP	Eligible Schools 60%+ ISP	Adopting Schools 60%+ ISP	Percent Adopting 60%+ ISP
Alabama	444	224	30	13.4 %	249	165	66.3 %	313	249	79.6 %
Alaska	208	12	2	16.7 %	46	35	76.1 %	180	171	95.0 %
Arizona	372	285	62	21.8 %	306	138	45.1 %	279	172	61.6 %
Arkansas	201	179	66	36.9 %	142	83	58.5 %	78	52	66.7 %
California	2,833	1,238	168	13.6 %	1,629	850	52.2 %	2,268	1,814	80.0 %
Colorado	105	182	18	9.9 %	134	69	51.5 %	54	18	33.3 %
Connecticut	307	108	39	36.1 %	72	56	77.8 %	232	212	91.4 %
Delaware	119	51	38	74.5 %	67	66	98.5 %	19	15	78.9 %
District of Columbia	234	55	30	54.5 %	174	158	90.8 %	88	46	52.3 %
Florida	1,356	326	15	4.6 %	393	53	13.5 %	2,465	1,288	52.3 %
Georgia	818	173	55	31.8 %	395	343	86.8 %	458	420	91.7 %
Hawaii	69	27	1	3.7 %	58	54	93.1 %	16	14	87.5 %
Idaho	82	78	46	59.0 %	34	27	79.4 %	12	9	75.0 %
Illinois	1,541	375	51	13.6 %	389	209	53.7 %	1,399	1,281	91.6 %
Indiana	362	93	15	16.1 %	269	227	84.4 %	157	120	76.4 %
Iowa	156	114	12	10.5 %	77	46	59.7 %	107	98	91.6 %
Kansas	75	62	4	6.5 %	105	67	63.8 %	23	4	17.4 %
Kentucky	984	91	52	57.1 %	273	258	94.5 %	696	674	96.8 %
Louisiana	1,016	93	45	48.4 %	332	310	93.4 %	667	661	99.1 %
Maine <sup>1</sup>	87	31	N/A	N/A	10	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A
Maryland	242	76	4	5.3 %	235	210	89.4 %	57	28	49.1 %
Massachusetts	613	164	46	28.0 %	232	180	77.6 %	440	387	88.0 %
Michigan	888	486	34	7.0 %	514	224	43.6 %	1,039	623	60.0 %
Minnesota	163	102	11	10.8 %	61	13	21.3 %	200	137	68.5 %
Mississippi <sup>2</sup>	410	143	4	2.8 %	180	102	56.7 %	362	303	83.7 %
Missouri	420	241	69	28.6 %	145	88	60.7 %	307	261	85.0 %
Montana	157	51	36	70.6 %	47	38	80.9 %	82	79	96.3 %
Nebraska	26	62	1	1.6 %	54	0	0.0 %	67	25	37.3 %
Nevada	167	59	7	11.9 %	189	151	79.9 %	29	9	31.0 %
New Hampshire	4	11	2	18.2 %	5	0	0.0 %	2	2	100.0 %
New Jersey	331	220	52	23.6 %	173	101	58.4 %	210	174	82.9 %
New Mexico	546	119	62	52.1 %	320	311	97.2 %	178	173	97.2 %
New York	3,565	241	143	59.3 %	312	275	88.1 %	3,269	3,147	96.3 %

**TABLE 3: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate by Schools' ISP for School Year 2018–2019**

State	Total Schools Adopting CEP	Eligible Schools 40–<50% ISP	Adopting Schools 40–<50% ISP	Percent Adopting 40–<50% ISP	Eligible Schools 50–<60% ISP	Adopting Schools 50–<60% ISP	Percent Adopting 50–<60% ISP	Eligible Schools 60%+ ISP	Adopting Schools 60%+ ISP	Percent Adopting 60%+ ISP
North Carolina	882	373	119	31.9 %	289	221	76.5 %	532	504	94.7 %
North Dakota	29	1	0	0.0 %	2	1	50.0 %	28	28	100.0 %
Ohio <sup>3</sup>	998	183	N/A	N/A	76	N/A	N/A	91	N/A	N/A
Oklahoma	427	200	99	49.5 %	272	255	93.8 %	93	73	78.5 %
Oregon	341	182	97	53.3 %	237	192	81.0 %	79	46	58.2 %
Pennsylvania	1,031	314	72	22.9 %	329	255	77.5 %	765	704	92.2 %
Rhode Island	37	38	7	18.4 %	26	9	34.6 %	40	21	52.5 %
South Carolina	515	141	37	26.2 %	197	167	84.8 %	325	310	95.4 %
South Dakota	97	30	12	40.0 %	39	25	64.1 %	67	60	89.6 %
Tennessee	836	272	140	51.5 %	370	341	92.2 %	369	353	95.7 %
Texas	2,716	1,033	66	6.4 %	1,362	635	46.6 %	2,708	2,015	74.4 %
Utah	52	7	6	85.7 %	30	30	100.0 %	21	16	76.2 %
Vermont	62	27	22	81.5 %	29	27	93.1 %	11	10	90.9 %
Virginia	428	246	20	8.1 %	299	239	79.9 %	178	169	94.9 %
Washington	273	266	55	20.7 %	227	96	42.3 %	245	121	49.4 %
West Virginia	540	167	123	73.7 %	346	325	93.9 %	103	90	87.4 %
Wisconsin	438	226	17	7.5 %	156	71	45.5 %	389	346	88.9 %
Wyoming	11	2	2	100.0 %	2	1	50.0 %	8	8	100.0 %
U.S. Total <sup>4</sup>	28,614	9,480	2,114	22.3 %	11,909	7,797	65.5 %	21,806	17,540	80.4 %

<sup>1</sup> Maine did not report the identified student percentages (ISP) that community eligibility schools use to claim federal reimbursements for meals served for 42 schools.

<sup>2</sup> Mississippi did not report the ISPs that community eligibility schools use to claim federal reimbursements for meals served for one school.

<sup>3</sup> Ohio did not report the ISPs that community eligibility schools use to claim federal reimbursements for meals served.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the states that did not report the identified student percentage (ISP) that community eligibility schools use for federal reimbursements for all adopting schools, some states reported ISPs for adopting schools that are below the 40 percent eligibility threshold (one school in California, eight schools in Michigan, two schools in Minnesota, two schools in Missouri, four schools in Montana, four schools in New Jersey, 36 schools in North Carolina, six schools in Oregon, one school in South Carolina, two schools in Tennessee, three schools in Vermont, one school in Washington, two schools in West Virginia, and four schools in Wisconsin). These participating schools in the states referenced above are not included in the total number of adopting schools by each ISP category. This accounts for the difference between the U.S. total number of adopting schools and the total number of adopting schools by ISP category.

**TABLE 4: Student Enrollment for School Years 2014–2015,<sup>1</sup> 2015–2016,<sup>2,3</sup> 2016–2017,<sup>4</sup> 2017–2018,<sup>5</sup> and 2018–2019<sup>6</sup>**

State	Total Student Enrollment					Change SY 2016–2017 to SY 2017–2018	Change SY 2017–2018 to SY 2018–2019
	SY 2014–2015	SY 2015–2016	SY 2016–2017	SY 2017–2018	SY 2018–2019		
Alabama	180,789	196,802	195,853	208,748	208,929	12,895	181
Alaska	27,666	29,234	34,106	36,575	37,244	2,469	669
Arizona	30,763	55,048	94,229	116,488	145,273	22,259	28,785
Arkansas	791	20,060	55,605	71,475	80,732	15,870	9,257
California	113,513	435,900	748,533	799,646	1,690,225	51,113	890,579
Colorado	12,455	34,920	36,198	39,244	39,950	3,046	706
Connecticut	66,524	105,547	110,322	118,067	151,552	7,745	33,485
Delaware	47,013	51,524	56,143	58,085	62,424	1,942	4,339
District of Columbia	44,485	54,061	56,774	60,548	83,028	3,774	22,480
Florida	274,071	474,006	579,138	705,602	858,135	126,464	152,533
Georgia	354,038	420,383	467,411	472,296	490,319	4,885	18,023
Hawaii	2,640	4,650	20,150	28,750	28,994	8,600	244
Idaho	18,828	32,299	33,058	33,898	28,876	840	-5,022
Illinois	552,751	672,831	685,101	725,241	731,062	40,140	5,821
Indiana	96,604	117,187	127,405	136,855	172,969	9,450	36,114
Iowa	32,103	46,021	50,589	53,880	67,192	3,291	13,312
Kansas	5,992	19,641	22,661	25,722	26,338	3,061	616
Kentucky	279,144	385,043	436,419	479,450	501,059	43,031	21,609
Louisiana	146,141	217,496	341,492	455,318	399,190	113,826	-56,128
Maine	5,284	17,977	20,411	20,435	23,733	24	3,298
Maryland	7,624	94,496	99,484	103,814	106,218	4,330	2,404
Massachusetts	134,071	200,948	238,872	260,364	282,030	21,492	21,666
Michigan	266,249	275,579	273,071	287,801	349,448	14,730	61,647
Minnesota	20,688	49,944	57,003	57,957	63,057	954	5,100
Mississippi	136,095	148,781	151,815	147,677	164,297	-4,138	16,620
Missouri	106,126	111,319	121,962	134,996	139,884	13,034	4,888
Montana	15,802	21,161	23,290	26,180	24,777	2,890	-1,403
Nebraska	180	2,425	4,277	7,411	7,276	3,134	-135
Nevada	7,917	15,970	71,345	95,001	100,957	23,656	5,956
New Hampshire	0	644	1,125	1,082	1,100	-43	18
New Jersey	99,840	107,277	127,108	140,199	153,533	13,091	13,334
New Mexico	119,300	149,057	164,569	177,388	175,756	12,819	-1,632

**TABLE 4: Student Enrollment for School Years 2014–2015,<sup>1</sup> 2015–2016,<sup>2,3</sup> 2016–2017,<sup>4</sup> 2017–2018,<sup>5</sup> and 2018–2019<sup>6</sup>**

State	Total Student Enrollment					Change SY 2016–2017 to SY 2017–2018	Change SY 2017–2018 to SY 2018–2019
	SY 2014–2015	SY 2015–2016	SY 2016–2017	SY 2017–2018	SY 2018–2019		
New York	505,859	528,748	603,795	1,586,981	1,646,409	983,186	59,428
North Carolina	310,850	357,307	367,705	433,204	418,820	65,499	-14,384
North Dakota	5,284	5,661	5,698	6,039	6,525	341	486
Ohio	305,451	354,727	363,860	397,594	409,467	33,734	11,873
Oklahoma	43,433	66,323	104,162	148,994	152,695	44,832	3,701
Oregon	103,601	129,635	130,336	129,766	122,553	-570	-7,213
Pennsylvania	327,573	394,630	426,984	470,275	509,073	43,291	38,798
Rhode Island	838	6,531	10,350	16,675	18,043	6,325	1,368
South Carolina	111,453	173,364	201,587	235,711	249,036	34,124	13,325
South Dakota	13,056	14,626	15,981	15,499	19,409	-482	3,910
Tennessee	417,165	436,821	428,424	437,641	389,163	9,217	-48,478
Texas	941,262	1,015,384	984,976	1,184,559	1,566,088	199,583	381,529
Utah	7,019	8,565	8,880	12,353	20,148	3,473	7,795
Vermont	7,386	12,751	13,508	13,946	13,768	438	-178
Virginia	42,911	99,404	119,051	156,687	204,610	37,636	47,923
Washington	53,369	69,432	75,357	95,514	110,815	20,157	15,301
West Virginia	124,978	145,057	177,875	195,075	208,960	17,200	13,885
Wisconsin	133,232	146,330	156,519	158,325	165,513	1,806	7,188
Wyoming	1,255	1,255	1,370	1,500	1,886	130	386
U.S. Total	6,661,462	8,534,782	9,701,937	11,782,531	13,628,538	2,080,594	1,846,007

<sup>1</sup> Data for the 2014–2015 school year is from [Take Up of Community Eligibility This School Year \(Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, February 2015\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> Data for the 2015–2016 school year is from [Community Eligibility Adoption Rises in the 2015–2016 School Year, Increasing Access to School Meals \(Food Research & Action Center and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, April 2016\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> The 2015–2016 school year report contained data on enrollment in community eligibility schools in Guam. The 2016–2017 school year report excludes Guam; therefore, the U.S. totals for the 2015–2016 school year have been adjusted.

<sup>4</sup> Some schools did not provide student enrollment information for the 2016–2017 school year: one school in California, two schools in Georgia, four schools in Idaho, three schools in Maine, 26 schools in Tennessee, and four schools in South Carolina.

<sup>5</sup> Some schools did not provide student enrollment information for the 2017–2018 school year: 12 schools in Alaska, 19 schools in Louisiana, four schools in Mississippi, five schools in Oklahoma, one school in South Carolina, and two schools in Vermont.

<sup>6</sup> Some schools did not provide student enrollment information for the 2018–2019 school year: four schools in Hawaii, 182 schools in Louisiana, seven schools in Michigan, 25 schools in Mississippi, 14 schools in South Carolina, and three schools in Utah.

**TABLE 5: Number of Schools Adopting the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for School Years 2014–2015,<sup>1</sup> 2015–2016,<sup>2</sup> 2016–2017,<sup>3</sup> 2017–2018,<sup>4</sup> and 2018–2019<sup>4</sup>**

State	Total School Adoption of CEP					Change SY 2016–2017 to SY 2017–2018	Change SY 2017–2018 to SY 2018–2019
	SY 2014–2015	SY 2015–2016	SY 2016–2017	SY 2017–2018	SY 2018–2019		
Alabama	347	392	391	425	444	34	19
Alaska	123	137	174	213	208	39	-5
Arizona	73	133	227	296	372	69	76
Arkansas	4	57	139	178	201	39	23
California	208	651	1,070	1,311	2,833	241	1,522
Colorado	34	82	91	101	105	10	4
Connecticut	133	212	228	241	307	13	66
Delaware	96	107	115	116	119	1	3
District of Columbia	125	155	160	166	234	6	68
Florida	548	831	1,001	1,142	1,356	141	214
Georgia	589	700	768	787	818	19	31
Hawaii	6	25	43	65	69	22	4
Idaho	50	88	92	92	82	0	-10
Illinois	1,041	1,322	1,363	1,499	1,541	136	42
Indiana	214	253	283	287	362	4	75
Iowa	78	110	119	123	156	4	33
Kansas	18	64	69	72	75	3	3
Kentucky	611	804	888	948	984	60	36
Louisiana	335	484	741	968	1,016	227	48
Maine	21	59	72	71	87	-1	16
Maryland	25	227	228	242	242	14	0
Massachusetts	294	462	525	574	613	49	39
Michigan	625	662	652	715	888	63	173
Minnesota	56	125	153	154	163	1	9
Mississippi	257	298	333	342	410	9	68
Missouri	298	330	367	402	420	35	18
Montana	93	127	138	158	157	20	-1
Nebraska	2	9	15	26	26	11	0
Nevada	13	36	122	153	167	31	14
New Hampshire	0	2	3	3	4	0	1
New Jersey	197	227	270	306	331	36	25
New Mexico	343	429	487	535	546	48	11



**TABLE 5: Number of Schools Adopting the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for School Years 2014–2015,<sup>1</sup> 2015–2016,<sup>2</sup> 2016–2017,<sup>3</sup> 2017–2018,<sup>4</sup> and 2018–2019<sup>4</sup>**

State	Total School Adoption of CEP					Change SY 2016–2017 to SY 2017–2018	Change SY 2017–2018 to SY 2018–2019
	SY 2014–2015	SY 2015–2016	SY 2016–2017	SY 2017–2018	SY 2018–2019		
New York	1,246	1,351	1,561	3,381	3,565	1,820	184
North Carolina	648	752	787	914	882	127	-32
North Dakota	23	24	25	26	29	1	3
Ohio	739	842	918	998	998	80	0
Oklahoma	100	184	301	413	427	112	14
Oregon	262	340	346	344	341	-2	-3
Pennsylvania	646	795	861	959	1,031	98	72
Rhode Island	1	10	21	34	37	13	3
South Carolina	226	348	412	471	515	59	44
South Dakota	142	109	124	89	97	-35	8
Tennessee	862	924	909	914	836	5	-78
Texas	1,477	1,665	1,678	2,070	2,716	392	646
Utah	22	28	29	35	52	6	17
Vermont	32	56	60	68	62	8	-6
Virginia	87	206	255	341	428	86	87
Washington	122	172	193	232	273	39	41
West Virginia	369	428	492	518	540	26	22
Wisconsin	348	381	415	422	438	7	16
Wyoming	5	5	7	10	11	3	1
U.S. Total	14,214	18,220	20,721	24,950	28,614	4,229	3,664

<sup>1</sup> Data for the 2014–2015 school year is from [Take Up of Community Eligibility This School Year \(Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, February 2015\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> Data for the 2015–2016 school year is from [Community Eligibility Adoption Rises in the 2015–2016 School Year, Increasing Access to School Meals \(Food Research & Action Center and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, April 2016\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> Data for the 2016–2017 school year is from [Community Eligibility Continues to Grow in the 2016–2017 School Year \(Food Research & Action Center, March 2017\)](#).

<sup>4</sup> For the 2017–2018 school year data, schools are defined as eligible for community eligibility if their identified student percentage (ISP) is 40 percent or higher, or if they adopted community eligibility. For the 2018–2019 school year data, schools are defined as eligible if they have an ISP of 40 percent or higher, or if they adopted community eligibility.



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