



Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools

School Year 2021–2022

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This report was written by Allyson Pérez and Crystal FitzSimons. The findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of FRAC alone.

About FRAC

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) improves the nutrition, health, and well-being of people struggling against poverty-related hunger in the United States through advocacy, partnerships, and by advancing bold and equitable policy solutions. For more information about FRAC, or to [sign up](#) for FRAC's e-newsletters, go to [frac.org](https://www.frac.org).



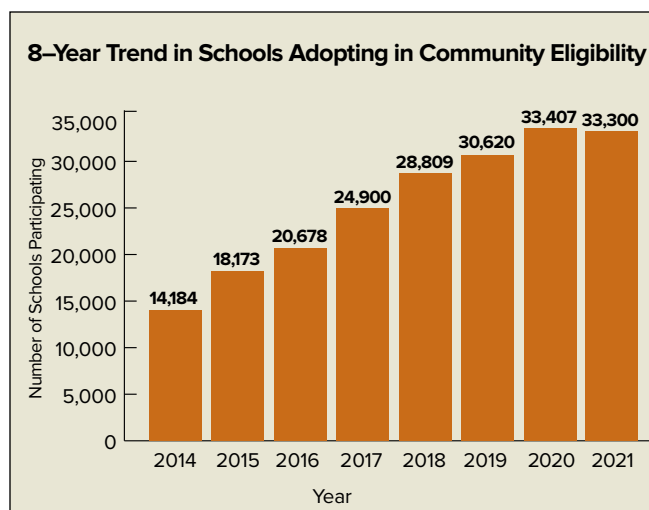
Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools School Year 2021–2022

Executive Summary

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows high-need schools to offer breakfast and lunch at no charge to all students on a four-year cycle. Created through the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, participation in community eligibility has grown each year since it became available nationwide in the 2014–2015 school year. Any district, group of schools in a district, or school with 40 percent or more “identified students”—children who are eligible for free school meals and already identified by means other than an individual household application—can choose to participate.

Schools that participate in community eligibility often see increased participation in school meals, allowing more students to experience the many educational and health benefits linked to school meal participation. A recent U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) community eligibility study on school year 2016–2017 found a 6.8 percent increase in school lunch participation and a 12.1 percent increase in school breakfast in the first year of implementation.¹ Under community eligibility, schools no longer have to collect and process school meal applications, which reduces administrative costs and paperwork, allowing school nutrition staff to focus more on offering healthy, appealing meals. 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.

During the 2021–2022 school year, all schools had the option of offering breakfast and lunch at no charge



through the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) waiver, and 90 percent of school nutrition departments nationwide have chosen this option.² The SSO waiver also provided schools the higher summer food reimbursement rates—free meals for all students combined with more funding have been critical to school nutrition finances as school nutrition departments have continued to struggle with supply chain disruptions and increased staffing costs. This waiver and many others were made possible due to USDA’s expanded waiver authority that Congress provided in response to the pandemic. Without Congressional action, these waivers are set to expire on June 30, 2022.

During the 2021–2022 school year, there was a small increase in the total number of school districts³ and a small decrease in the total number of schools adopting community eligibility even if most did not officially operate under the provision and instead opted for the higher reimbursement rates made available through the

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture (2022). *USDA Community Eligibility Provision Characteristics Study, School Year 2016–2017* (Summary). Available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/CEPSY2016-2017-Summary.pdf>.

² U.S. Department of Agriculture (2022). Results of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service-Administered School Food Authority Survey on Supply Chain Disruptions. Available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/FNS-Survey-Supply-Chain-Disruptions.pdf>.

³ 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.

SSO waiver. Here are the top-level findings for this year:

- 5,543 school districts have one or more schools adopting community eligibility, an increase of 35 school districts, or 0.6 percent, from the 2020–2021 school year;
- 33,300 schools have adopted community eligibility, a decrease of 107 schools, or 0.3 percent, from the prior school year;
- 74.3 percent of eligible schools have adopted community eligibility;⁴ and
- 16.2 million children attend a school that has adopted community eligibility, an increase of over 240,000 children, or 1.5 percent, from the prior school year.

Despite these numbers, there are many eligible schools that have not adopted community eligibility, even though they and their students stand to benefit from community eligibility. Take-up rates vary substantially across the states. Several factors that existed prior to the pandemic, such as challenges associated with the loss of traditional school meal application data, low rates of direct certification (the latter being the foundation of community eligibility), and variation in the use of community eligibility and child nutrition waivers offered for the 2021–2022 school year, have hindered widespread adoption in some states and school districts. Further, many schools and school districts across the country saw a decrease in student enrollments, which is reflected in some states in the number of children attending schools that have adopted community eligibility even as the national number increased.⁵ 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.

As school districts look ahead to the 2022–2023 school year, community eligibility offers an important opportunity to continue providing nutritious breakfasts and lunches at no charge to students at high-need

schools across the country when the USDA child nutrition waivers are set to expire.⁶ When schools, districts, and families are forced to return to pre-pandemic school nutrition operations, school breakfast and lunch will be a critical nutrition support for the millions of children whose families have been impacted by the economic crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, State child nutrition agencies, and anti-hunger and education advocates can work together to promote community eligibility to eligible school districts and to provide technical assistance and support to allow these districts to implement community eligibility successfully and sustainably.

About This Report

This report analyzes community eligibility adoption—nationally and for each state and the District of Columbia—in the 2021–2022 school year, and is based on three measures:

- the number of eligible and adopting 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 have adopted, based on the school's poverty level.

It is important to note that even as school districts and schools have adopted community eligibility, most (90 percent of school nutrition departments nationwide²) operated through the Seamless Summer Option, which allowed them to offer breakfast and lunch to all students at no charge and provided a higher reimbursement rate for each meal.

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

⁴ To participate in community eligibility, approximately two-thirds of the students in the school or school district must live in a low-income household. School districts can implement community eligibility in one school, a group of schools, or districtwide if the school, group of schools, or district has at least 40 percent of its students directly certified to receive free or reduced-price school meals, primarily due to their household's participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. An analysis by the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that for every 10 children who are certified for free school meals outside of the school meal application process, an additional six would be certified through a school meal application.

⁵ Kamentz, Anya, Turner, Cory, and Khurana, Mansee. National Public Radio (2021). Where Are the Students? For a Second Straight Year, School Enrollment is Dropping. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/15/1062999168/school-enrollment-drops-for-second-straight-year>.

⁶ FRAC and our education, child, youth-serving, and anti-hunger partners continue to call on Congress to extend USDA's waivers nationwide through September 30, 2023, before they expire on June 30, 2022.

How CEP Works

Community eligibility schools are high-need 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 who are certified for free school meals without an application (for example, students whose households participate 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 meal 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 increases participation among all students because it eliminates any perception that the school meals programs are just for children from households with low incomes; and
- 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 in community eligibility. 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, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations 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 (ISP) of 40 percent or higher.

Identified students 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 ISP. 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 ISP 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 to receive 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 2021–2022 School Year

School District Adoption

Nationally, 5,543 school districts—63.8 percent of those eligible—adopted the Community Eligibility Provision in one or more schools.⁷

This is a small increase of 35 school districts since the 2020–2021 school year, when 5,508 school districts adopted. The smaller nationwide increase in school district take-up rates compared to prior years is likely due to the availability of the Seamless Summer Option waiver, which was announced as an option to provide free meals in March 2021, months before school districts determined whether or not they would adopt community eligibility.

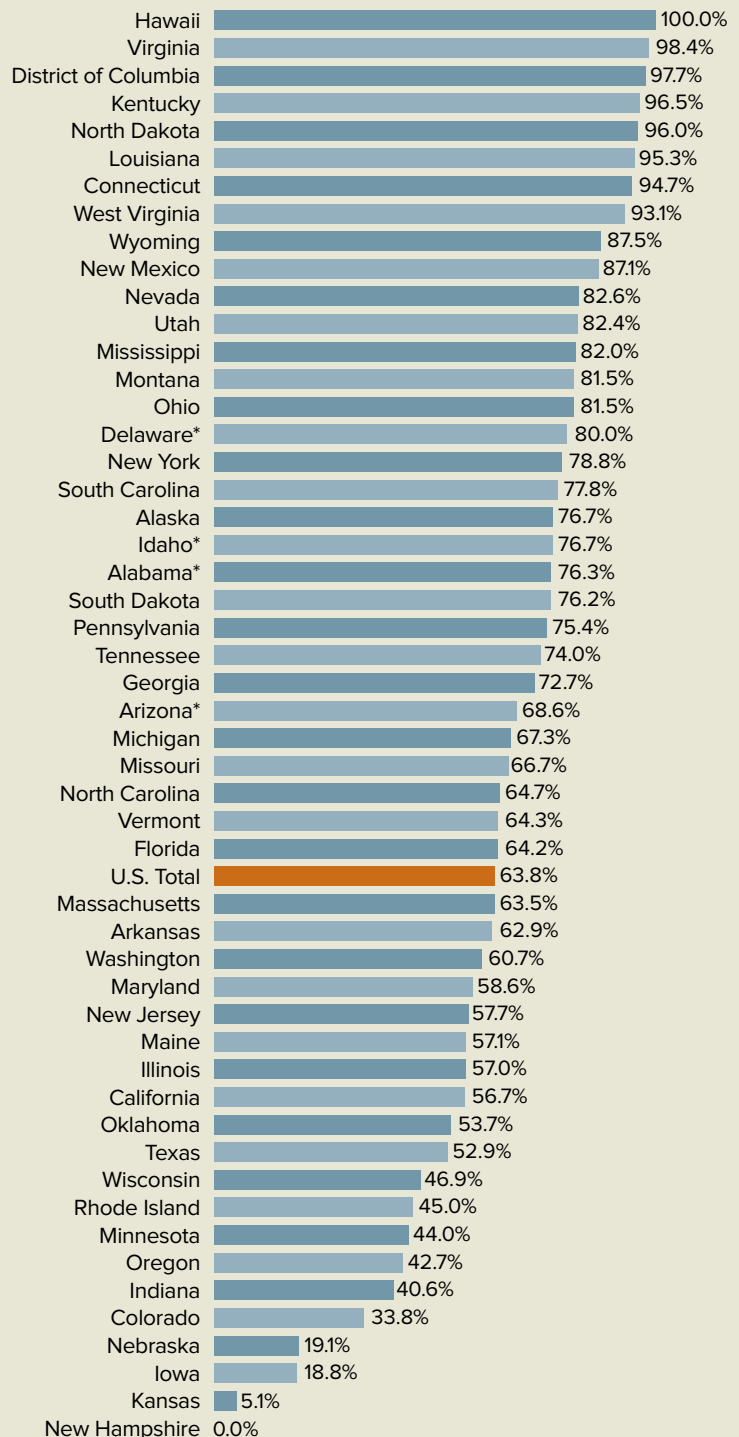
The median state’s take-up rate in school year 2021–2022 for eligible school districts is 68.6 percent; however, school district take-up rates across the states vary significantly, from 18.8 percent or lower in Iowa, Kansas, and New Hampshire, to over 90 percent in West Virginia, Connecticut, Louisiana, North Dakota, Kentucky, District of Columbia, Virginia, and Hawaii.

Several states saw increases in the 2021–2022 school year. Virginia had the largest growth in the number of school districts adopting, increasing by 25 school districts. Ohio followed in school district adoption growth with 12 school districts.

Twenty-two states have had small decreases—between one and seven—in the number of districts implementing community eligibility in the 2021–2022 school year. Of those that have had fewer school districts adopting in community eligibility, 17 have had a decrease

⁷ Under federal law, states are required to publish annually 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. During the pandemic, USDA has allowed states to extend this deadline and other community eligibility deadlines including for the 2022–2023 school year. For more information on requirements related to the published lists, see <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/covid-19-child-nutrition-response-82>.

Percentage of Eligible School Districts Adopting Community Eligibility in School Year 2021–2022



in the number of eligible school districts. Nebraska has had the largest decrease in adopting school districts—seven school districts—despite adding 11 more eligible school districts, resulting in the percentage of eligible districts adopting decreasing from 27.9 percent to 19.1 percent.

A primary factor in the growth in school district adoption of community eligibility in the 2020–2021⁸ and 2021–2022 school years compared to the 2019–2020 school year (prior to the pandemic impacting school meal operations)⁹ is the increase of identified student percentages (ISPs) observed as a result of the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As many families across the country found themselves in greater financial need, this led to increased participation in SNAP, leading to greater direct certification, and thus, higher ISPs in schools and districts across the country.¹⁰

Further, 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.

Despite the slight increase in the 2021–2022 school year, states need to focus on direct certification and continue to improve their systems to ensure that school districts can maintain the ISPs 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, 12 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 in the 2018–2019 school year, pointing to missed opportunities for school districts to increase their ISPs to facilitate easier community eligibility implementation.¹¹

As school districts transition from the Seamless Summer Option waiver back to normal operations in the upcoming school year, conducting robust direct certification will be critical to support the implementation of community eligibility. It also can help reduce the number of school meal applications that districts have to collect and process, particularly as many families have not completed school meal applications during the last two school years.

⁸ Food Research & Action Center (2021). *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2020–2021*. Available at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/CEP-Report-2021.pdf>.

⁹ Food Research & Action Center (2020). *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2019–2020*. Available at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/CEP-Report-2020.pdf>.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (2021). Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Transformed the U.S. Federal Food and Nutrition Assistance Landscape. Available at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2021/october/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-transformed-the-u-s-federal-food-and-nutrition-assistance-landscape/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20SNAP%20participants,rest%20of%20the%20fiscal%20year.>

¹¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture (2021). Direct Certification in the National School Lunch Program State Implementation Progress Report to Congress School Year 2017–2018 and School Year 2018–2019. Available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/NSLPDirectCertification2017-1.pdf>.

School Adoption

In the 2021–2022 school year, there are 33,300 schools adopting community eligibility, including schools from 49 states and the District of Columbia. Overall, school adoption of community eligibility decreased slightly, falling by 107 schools from the prior school year. This slight decrease in school participation was likely driven by the March 2021 announcement of the Seamless Summer Option waiver for the 2021–2022 school year. In the 2021–2022 school year, 74.3 percent of all eligible schools have adopted community eligibility nationally, with a median state take-up rate of 77.9 percent.

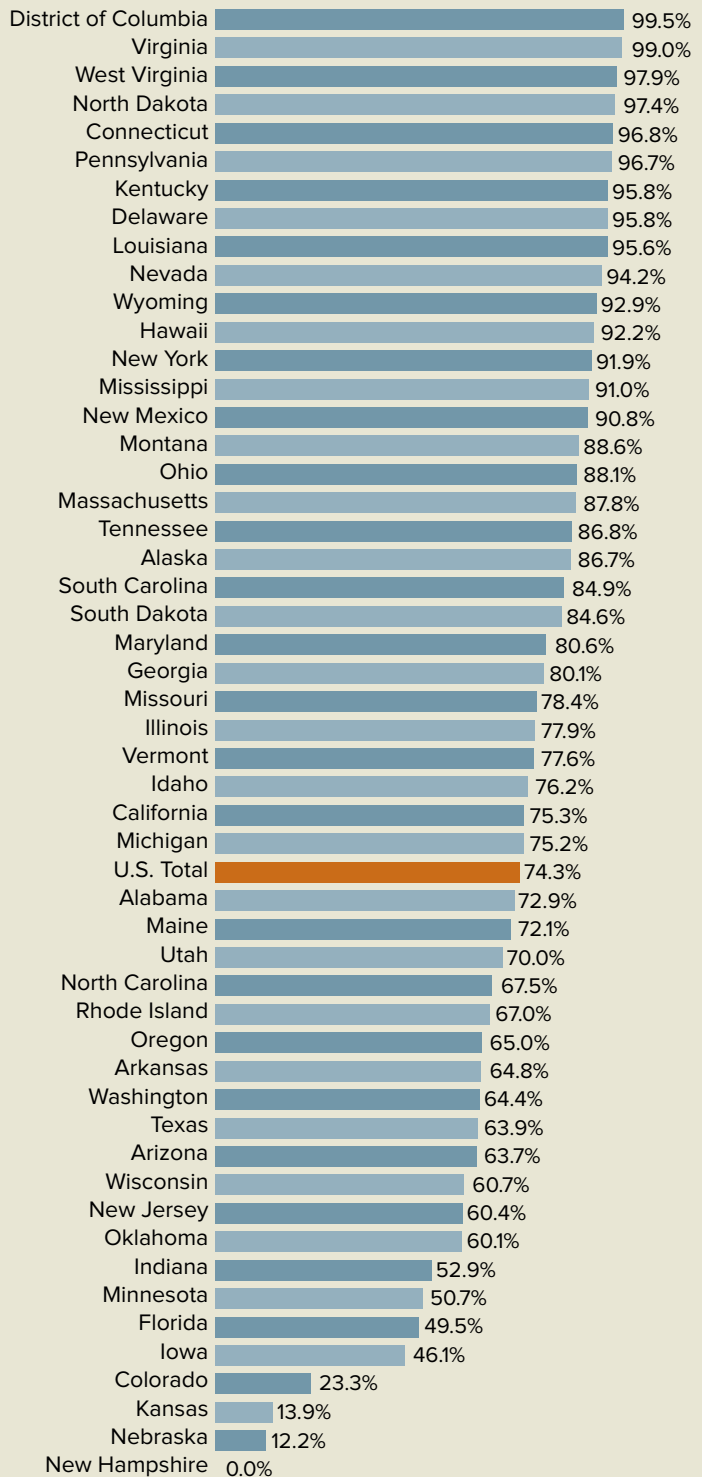
Among the states, the percentage of eligible and adopting schools varies significantly. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have 90 percent or more of their eligible schools adopting community eligibility. An additional nine states have 80 percent or more of their eligible schools adopting. Alternatively, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and New Hampshire had less than 40 percent of their eligible schools adopting: 23.3 percent, 13.9 percent, 12.2 percent, and 0 percent, respectively.

Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia have seen an increase in the number of schools adopting community eligibility, and two states—Rhode Island and North Dakota—maintained the same number of community eligibility schools during the 2021–2022 school year. Virginia had the largest increase, with 226 more schools adopting community eligibility since the 2020–2021 school year. Illinois and Washington added 130 and 88 schools, respectively. Smaller states with fewer eligible schools also have made strong progress, including Hawaii, which increased by 26 schools, and the District of Columbia, which added 17 schools.

Twenty-two states have experienced a decrease in the number of schools eligible to implement community eligibility. The largest decreases were in New York (612 schools),¹² North Carolina

¹² New York’s decrease in school participation was driven by school consolidation in the school district New York City Chancellor’s Office, and did not cause a corresponding decrease in the number of children attending community eligibility schools.

Percentage of Eligible Schools Adopting Community Eligibility in School Year 2021–2022



(76 schools), California (47 schools), and Oregon (34 schools). Despite growth nationally and in many states, some states still have very low take-up rates compared to the national average. In six states, less than 50 percent of all eligible schools are adopting community eligibility.

School Adoption by Poverty Level

All schools that qualify for community eligibility are considered to be high need, but a school's ability to implement community eligibility successfully—and maintain financial viability—typically improves when its ISP is higher. For this report, the Food Research & Action Center examined the number of schools adopting in each state, based on their ISP as a proxy for the school's poverty level.

Schools with higher ISPs receive the free reimbursement rate for more meals, which makes community eligibility a more financially viable option. As a result, schools with ISPs 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 ISPs; that has been the case since the program became available nationwide. Still, since the 2016–2017 school year, the number of schools participating with an ISP between 40 and 50 has more than doubled, and the number of schools participating with an ISP between 50 and 60 percent has increased by nearly one-third, as schools become more familiar with the positive impact of community eligibility on school nutrition finances and the benefits for children and families.¹³

In the 2021–2022 school year, of the 33,300 schools adopting community eligibility, the majority of schools—19,150 or 57.5 percent—had ISPs of 60 percent or higher. Of adopting schools with lower ISPs, 8,901 schools, or 26.7 percent, had ISPs between 50 and 60 percent, and 4,569 schools, or 13.7 percent, had ISPs

between 40 and 50 percent. Among schools with ISPs between 40 and 50 percent, the national average of take-up rate for eligible schools was 43.9 percent, with a median of 57.4 percent.

Among states, the percentage of eligible versus adopting schools in the 40 to 50 percent ISP group varies significantly. Three states and the District of Columbia had 90 percent or more eligible low ISP schools adopting. An additional six states had 80 percent or more of their schools adopting. Alternatively,

Preparing for the 2022–2023 School Year

The U.S. Department of Agriculture issued a nationwide waiver to allow states to extend the community eligibility deadlines for the upcoming school year, which many states are utilizing. This gives school districts (when they calculate their ISP) additional time to run direct certification and prepare for a return to community eligibility. The school breakfast and lunch reimbursements are calculated by multiplying the ISP by 1.6 to determine the percentage of meals that will be reimbursed at the free rate. For example, a school with 50 percent identified students would be reimbursed for 80 percent of the breakfasts and lunches served at the free reimbursement rate and the remaining 20 percent at the paid rate.

Leading up to the extended deadline of June 30 to set their ISP,¹⁴ school districts should implement direct certification best practices to set their district's ISP so that it will accurately reflect the poverty level within the school for the upcoming school year. Below is a list of some best practices:

- perform direct certification matches frequently leading up to June 30;
- when possible, extend eligibility to students living in households with other students who are directly certified;
- connect with the homeless liaison/school counselor to identify any students who are homeless or have come into foster care; and
- partner with community organizations to perform SNAP outreach to families within the school district.

¹³ Food Research & Action Center (2017). *Community Eligibility Continues to Grow in the 2016–2017 School Year*. Available at https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/CEP-Report_Final_Links_032317-1.pdf.

¹⁴ States may request a waiver to extend the deadline for setting ISPs from USDA. While they may extend the deadline as far out as June 30, 2022, they may extend the deadline to any date on or before June 30, 2022, as well. Contact your State agency to learn this year's deadlines for your state.

14 states had less than 30 percent of their eligible low-ISP schools adopting, with Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and New Hampshire all with fewer than 10 percent of eligible low-ISP schools adopting.

Student Enrollment

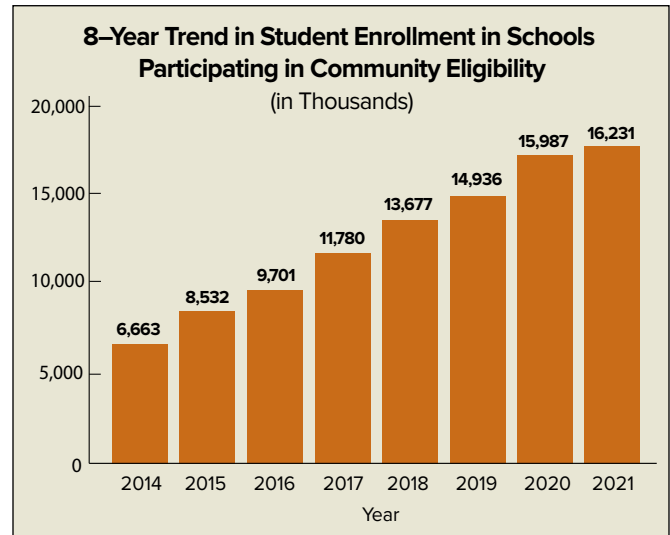
The reach of community eligibility is most evident in the number of students impacted. In the 2021–2022 school year, 16.2 million students attend schools that have adopted the Community Eligibility Provision; this is up from 15.9 million in the 2020–2021 school year. California and Texas have the most children attending schools that are adopting community eligibility, with approximately 2.2 million and 2.1 million in each state, respectively. Nationally, more than 1 in 4 students attending a school that is adopting community eligibility lives in California or Texas.

Eighteen states have seen increases in the number of students in community eligibility schools in the 2021–2022 school year. The states that saw the biggest increases in the number of enrolled students are Virginia and Alabama, having added over 127,000 and nearly 121,000 students, respectively. Massachusetts, Washington, and New York had significant increases relative to other states as well, adding over 56,000, nearly 37,000, and over 36,000, respectively.

Unfortunately, 31 states saw decreases in student enrollment numbers in community eligibility schools in the 2021–2022 school year. Twenty-four states saw decreases of more than 1,000 students, and eight states had decreases of more than 10,000 students. The state that saw the most dramatic decrease was North Carolina, which saw a decrease of more than 48,000 students, or 10.4 percent, from the 2020–2021 school year. California, Texas, Arizona, and Nevada all had significant decreases as well, with nearly 33,000, nearly 23,000, nearly 23,000, and nearly 22,000, respectively. While some of these states saw schools fall out of community eligibility, many attribute these losses to overall drops in student enrollment statewide as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community Eligibility: A Key Strategy for Next School Year

In March 2020, Congress gave USDA nationwide waiver authority to ensure meal access and support child nutrition program operations during the pandemic. USDA issued a series of school nutrition waivers that



granted schools various flexibilities, including offering breakfasts, lunches, snacks, and suppers to all students free of charge regardless of their family income. Over the past two school years, these waivers have continued in various forms, allowing schools to offer meals free of charge to all students through the 2021–2022 school year. However, USDA’s authority to grant these waivers ends on June 30, 2022. Without Congressional action, schools will return to pre-pandemic school nutrition operations for the upcoming 2022–2023 school year.

The past two years have highlighted the success and importance of offering healthy school meals to all students free of charge. The waiver expiration may end this reality for some schools, but community eligibility offers many schools and school districts across the country the opportunity to continue offering free meals to all students. For schools with ISPs of 40 percent or higher, community eligibility provides an excellent opportunity to continue providing students free meals as they have been since March 2020. For this reason, it has never been more important for schools and districts to consider adopting community eligibility for the upcoming school year.

Many states have applied for waivers from USDA to extend the annual community eligibility deadlines, allowing schools and districts more time to calculate their ISP and make considerations before adopting. Eligible school districts can contact their State agencies for this year’s deadlines and should consider community eligibility in order to continue serving healthy meals to all students free of charge in the upcoming school year and beyond.

Making Investments in Community Eligibility

In spring 2022, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released a Community Eligibility Provision Characteristics Study in the 2016–2017 school year. The report found that many schools and districts participating in community eligibility saw increased meal participation and federal reimbursements, an increase in average daily attendance, the elimination of unpaid school meal fees, and reduced stigma for low-income students.¹⁵

The report also found that the vast majority of districts, 76 percent, had implemented community eligibility district-wide. The most often cited concerns among eligible non-participating districts involved district-wide ISPs and the financial viability of using the current multiplier, with 51 percent of eligible non-participating school districts reporting that increasing the 1.6 multiplier would make community eligibility more appealing.

The report's findings support the need for additional investments to bolster the adoption rates of community eligibility: increasing the multiplier that determines the

amount of federal reimbursement a school receives from 1.6 to 2.5 for all schools and lowering the eligibility threshold from 40 percent to 25 percent would help eliminate financial barriers and make more high-need schools eligible to participate. These investments would make community eligibility a financially viable option for more high-need schools and increase the number of students experiencing the educational and health benefits linked to healthy school meals for all.¹⁶

As Congress considers ways to strengthen and improve community eligibility, they should increase the multiplier, lower the eligibility threshold, and create a statewide community eligibility option in any legislative package that moves forward with child nutrition provisions.

Read [FRAC's summary of the characteristics study](#) for a more detailed analysis, and review these [fact sheets](#) to learn more about the expected impact of the community eligibility investments described above in each state.

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 level¹⁷ 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.

Illinois, Kentucky, New York, and Pennsylvania are able to directly certify children for free school meals based on participation in Medicaid and an income test. Additional states (California, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin)

are using Medicaid data and an income test to directly certify children for free or reduced-price school meals.¹⁸

In 2021, the USDA reopened their request for proposals for states to be included in the Medicaid Direct Certification Demonstration Project, approving eight states to begin participating in the 2022–2023 school year: Alabama, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Illinois was also approved to add reduced-price direct certification through Medicaid; as noted above, they have been using Medicaid to directly certify students for free meals only.

States may also apply to begin participating in the 2023–2024 school year. The deadline to apply is September 30, 2022. The Food Research & Action Center encourages states to apply so they can benefit from the demonstration project's positive impact on children, families, and schools. Learn more by reading [USDA's Request for Proposals](#) or [reviewing FRAC's summary](#).

¹⁵ USDA Food and Nutrition Service (2022). *USDA Community Eligibility Provision Characteristics Study, SY 2016–17*. Available at: [https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/usda-cep-characteristics-study-sy-2016-17#:~:text=This%20Community%20Eligibility%20Provision%20\(CEP\),about%20the%20impact%20of%20CEP](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/usda-cep-characteristics-study-sy-2016-17#:~:text=This%20Community%20Eligibility%20Provision%20(CEP),about%20the%20impact%20of%20CEP).

¹⁶ Food Research & Action Center (2019). *School Meals are Essential for Student Health and Learning*. Available at https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/School-Meals-are-Essential-Health-and-Learning_FNL.pdf.

¹⁷ As defined in section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)).

¹⁸ It is worth noting that if a child can be directly certified for free school meals through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, foster care, Head Start, or through being migrant or homeless, that certification always will take precedence over Medicaid direct certification.

Conclusion

Community eligibility allows high-need schools and districts to meet the nutritional needs of the many students they serve. The option creates hunger-free schools by ensuring that all students have access to the nutritious school breakfasts and lunches needed to be well-nourished and ready to learn, and it allows school nutrition departments to use their limited resources to provide nutritious and appealing meals by streamlining administrative requirements.

As the nation recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, community eligibility offers an important opportunity for schools to continue to serve nutritious breakfasts

and lunches at no charge to all students in high-need schools. To increase the reach of community eligibility, states and school districts must work together to ensure that direct certification systems identify all students so that a school's identified student percentage accurately reflects the need within the school. Outreach and technical assistance by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, State agencies, and anti-hunger advocates also will be critical as schools consider the social, health, and financial benefits of community eligibility, with many considering implementation for the first time in the 2022–2023 school year as a way to maintain access to healthy school meals for all their students.

Additional Resources

- [Direct Certification Improves Low-Income Student Access to School Meals: An Updated Guide to Direct Certification](#)
- [School District Strategies for Improving Direct Certification](#)
- [CEP Financial Calculators](#) (School districts and other stakeholders should use these tools to group schools strategically and to maximize the federal funding received.)
- [Community Eligibility: Making it Work With Lower ISPs](#)

For more information and additional resources to help determine if community eligibility is a possibility for your school district, go to FRAC's [Community Eligibility webpage](#).

Technical Notes

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) obtained information on schools that were approved to operate under community eligibility in the 2021–2022 school year from State education agencies or entities at the state level that administer the federal school nutrition programs. Between November 2021 and April 2022, 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. FRAC also gave agencies an opportunity to review the data in the tables in this report before it was published.

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). For the 2021–2022 school year, this deadline was extended by USDA to June 30, 2021, in order to grant flexibility to State agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic. FRAC compared this published list to the lists of approved schools, and compiled a universe of eligible and approved schools and districts in the 2021–2022 school year. 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.

Similar to last year, FRAC gave the states the option to report both eligible and adopting schools in the fall data collection. This gave states the opportunity to update their eligible schools list to reflect any school closures or consolidations. Sixteen states—Connecticut, District of Columbia, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan,

Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming—chose to provide both eligible and adopting schools for this analysis.

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 ISP the schools use to determine the federal reimbursement for meals served, and the total number of students attending each adopting school.

USDA issued child nutrition waivers for the 2021–2022 school year that allowed school districts to operate the Seamless Summer Option of the National School Lunch Program, and that waived the area eligibility requirement, thus allowing meals to be offered at no charge to all students. With 90 percent of school nutrition departments operating under this waiver, most school districts and schools that were approved to adopt community eligibility actually provided meals during the 2021–2022 school year through the Seamless Summer Option waivers.

The following states had schools that did not provide student enrollment numbers:

- 17 schools in Alabama
- three schools in Alaska
- one school in Colorado
- one school in Idaho
- two schools in Kentucky

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- four schools in Louisiana
 - 75 schools in Maine
 - one school in Maryland
 - one school in Montana
 - one school in North Carolina
 - two schools in Oregon
 - three schools in Tennessee

Some states did not provide the identified student percentage used by adopting community eligibility schools to calculate federal reimbursements for meals served, often referred to as the “claiming ISP” or “grouped ISP.” For these schools, the ISPs are shown as N/A in the database:

- 75 schools in Maine
- 17 schools in Texas

Some states reported schools’ free claiming percentages (ISP multiplied by 1.6) as 100 percent, so it is impossible to know the exact grouped ISP. It can be determined that the school is participating in community eligibility with an ISP of 62.5 percent or above. In these cases, 62.5 percent was used in the database:

- 1,628 schools in California
- 218 schools in Connecticut
- 20 schools in Iowa
- 383 schools in Kentucky
- 229 schools in Missouri
- 10 schools in Nebraska
- 444 schools in North Carolina
- 403 schools in Ohio
- 709 schools in Pennsylvania

TABLE 1: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate in School Districts for School Years (SY) 2020–2021¹ and 2021–2022

State	Eligible for CEP SY 2020–2021	Adopting CEP SY 2020–2021	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible SY 2020–2021	Eligible for CEP SY 2021–2022	Adopting CEP SY 2021–2022	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible SY 2021–2022
Alabama ²	83	55	66.3%	76	58	76.3%
Alaska	41	34	82.9%	43	33	76.7%
Arizona ³	263	184	70.0%	261	179	68.6%
Arkansas	171	75	43.9%	116	73	62.9%
California	903	380	42.1%	677	384	56.7%
Colorado	69	23	33.3%	71	24	33.8%
Connecticut	77	55	71.4%	57	54	94.7%
Delaware	23	19	82.6%	25	20	80.0%
District of Columbia	41	37	90.2%	43	42	97.7%
Florida	294	200	68.0%	316	203	64.2%
Georgia	131	107	81.7%	150	109	72.7%
Hawaii	12	11	91.7%	13	13	100.0%
Idaho ⁴	51	23	45.1%	30	23	76.7%
Illinois	706	290	41.1%	523	298	57.0%
Indiana	259	113	43.6%	278	113	40.6%
Iowa	115	22	19.1%	112	21	18.8%
Kansas	110	10	9.1%	78	4	5.1%
Kentucky	174	166	95.4%	172	166	96.5%
Louisiana	133	125	94.0%	129	123	95.3%
Maine	104	29	27.9%	49	28	57.1%
Maryland	22	16	72.7%	29	17	58.6%
Massachusetts	139	103	74.1%	156	99	63.5%
Michigan	720	405	56.3%	606	408	67.3%
Minnesota	158	69	43.7%	150	66	44.0%
Mississippi	161	75	46.6%	89	73	82.0%
Missouri	224	103	46.0%	156	104	66.7%
Montana	66	57	86.4%	65	53	81.5%
Nebraska	104	29	27.9%	115	22	19.1%
Nevada	25	21	84.0%	23	19	82.6%
New Hampshire	9	3	33.3%	5	0	0.0%
New Jersey	160	83	51.9%	137	79	57.7%
New Mexico	142	125	88.0%	139	121	87.1%
New York	588	465	79.1%	598	471	78.8%
North Carolina	141	104	73.8%	156	101	64.7%

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TABLE 1: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate in School Districts for School Years (SY) 2020–2021¹ and 2021–2022

State	Eligible for CEP SY 2020–2021	Adopting CEP SY 2020–2021	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible SY 2020–2021	Eligible for CEP SY 2021–2022	Adopting CEP SY 2021–2022	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible SY 2021–2022
North Dakota	26	23	88.5%	25	24	96.0%
Ohio	477	331	69.4%	421	343	81.5%
Oklahoma	188	109	58.0%	205	110	53.7%
Oregon	137	91	66.4%	206	88	42.7%
Pennsylvania	403	243	60.3%	329	248	75.4%
Rhode Island	22	9	40.9%	20	9	45.0%
South Carolina	80	61	76.3%	81	63	77.8%
South Dakota	46	29	63.0%	42	32	76.2%
Tennessee	190	97	51.1%	131	97	74.0%
Texas	911	489	53.7%	926	490	52.9%
Utah	15	14	93.3%	17	14	82.4%
Vermont	31	19	61.3%	28	18	64.3%
Virginia	132	98	74.2%	125	123	98.4%
Washington	160	100	62.5%	178	108	60.7%
West Virginia	55	54	98.2%	58	54	93.1%
Wisconsin	245	117	47.8%	243	114	46.9%
Wyoming	9	8	88.9%	8	7	87.5%
U.S. Total	9,546	5,508	57.7%	8,686	5,543	63.8%

¹For the 2020–2021 school year 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. For the 2021–2022 school year 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.

²Alabama's eligibility and participation data for the 2020–2021 school year has been updated by the State agency since the publication of *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, 2020–2021*. Data in this table reflects these changes.

³Arizona's eligibility data for the 2020–2021 school year has been updated by the State agency since the publication of *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, 2020–2021*. Data in this table reflects these changes.

⁴Idaho's eligibility data for the 2020–2021 school year has been updated by the State agency since the publication of *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, 2020–2021*. Data in this table reflects these changes.

TABLE 2: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate in Schools for School Years (SY) 2020–2021¹ and 2021–2022

State	Eligible for CEP SY 2020–2021	Adopting CEP SY 2020–2021	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible SY 2020–2021	Eligible for CEP SY 2021–2022	Adopting CEP SY 2021–2022	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible SY 2021–2022
Alabama ²	698	454	65.0%	672	490	72.9%
Alaska	236	216	91.5%	240	208	86.7%
Arizona ³	707	500	70.7%	774	493	63.7%
Arkansas	463	255	55.1%	400	259	64.8%
California	5,936	3,777	63.6%	4,952	3,730	75.3%
Colorado	346	108	31.2%	429	100	23.3%
Connecticut	493	426	86.4%	434	420	96.8%
Delaware	123	116	94.3%	119	114	95.8%
District of Columbia	170	166	97.6%	184	183	99.5%
Florida	2,796	1,440	51.5%	2,955	1,462	49.5%
Georgia	948	819	86.4%	1,090	873	80.1%
Hawaii	113	80	70.8%	115	106	92.2%
Idaho ⁴	134	62	46.3%	84	64	76.2%
Illinois	2,766	1,693	61.2%	2,340	1,823	77.9%
Indiana	879	515	58.6%	957	506	52.9%
Iowa	378	177	46.8%	382	176	46.1%
Kansas	514	44	8.6%	223	31	13.9%
Kentucky	1,102	1,060	96.2%	1,107	1,061	95.8%
Louisiana	1,163	1,087	93.5%	1,145	1,095	95.6%
Maine	231	73	31.6%	104	75	72.1%
Maryland	387	364	94.1%	443	357	80.6%
Massachusetts	823	720	87.5%	818	718	87.8%
Michigan	2,218	1,466	66.1%	1,951	1,468	75.2%
Minnesota	312	153	49.0%	296	150	50.7%
Mississippi	689	390	56.6%	413	376	91.0%
Missouri	720	432	60.0%	552	433	78.4%
Montana	171	154	90.1%	166	147	88.6%
Nebraska	274	43	15.7%	368	45	12.2%
Nevada	433	399	92.1%	412	388	94.2%
New Hampshire	19	3	15.8%	13	0	0.0%
New Jersey	606	315	52.0%	528	319	60.4%
New Mexico	630	574	91.1%	612	556	90.8%
New York ⁵	3,890	3,633	93.4%	3,289	3,021	91.9%
North Carolina	1,218	955	78.4%	1,302	879	67.5%

CONTINUED

TABLE 2: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate in Schools for School Years (SY) 2020–2021¹ and 2021–2022

State	Eligible for CEP SY 2020–2021	Adopting CEP SY 2020–2021	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible SY 2020–2021	Eligible for CEP SY 2021–2022	Adopting CEP SY 2021–2022	Percentage Adopting CEP of Total Eligible SY 2021–2022
North Dakota	42	37	88.1%	38	37	97.4%
Ohio	1,273	1,025	80.5%	1,205	1,062	88.1%
Oklahoma	483	306	63.4%	542	326	60.1%
Oregon ⁶	685	622	90.8%	904	588	65.0%
Pennsylvania	1,496	1,171	78.3%	1,212	1,172	96.7%
Rhode Island	91	61	67.0%	91	61	67.0%
South Carolina	617	531	86.1%	634	538	84.9%
South Dakota	134	102	76.1%	130	110	84.6%
Tennessee	1,528	831	54.4%	974	845	86.8%
Texas	5,666	3,700	65.3%	5,852	3,740	63.9%
Utah	58	54	93.1%	60	42	70.0%
Vermont	81	56	69.1%	76	59	77.6%
Virginia	1,210	782	64.6%	1,018	1,008	99.0%
Washington	639	394	61.7%	748	482	64.4%
West Virginia	598	558	93.3%	606	593	97.9%
Wisconsin	752	494	65.7%	820	498	60.7%
Wyoming	15	14	93.3%	14	13	92.9%
U.S. Total	47,954	33,407	69.7%	44,793	33,300	74.3%

¹ For the 2020–2021 school year data, schools are defined as eligible if they have an ISP of 40 percent or higher, or if they adopted community eligibility. For the 2021–2022 school year data, schools are defined as eligible if they have an ISP of 40 percent or higher, or if they adopted community eligibility.

² Alabama's eligibility and participation data for the 2020–2021 school year has been updated by the State agency since the publication of *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, 2020–2021*. Data in this table reflects these changes.

³ Arizona's eligibility data for the 2020–2021 school year has been updated by the State agency since the publication of *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, 2020–2021*. Data in this table reflects these changes.

⁴ Idaho's eligibility data for the 2020–2021 school year has been updated by the State agency since the publication of *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, 2020–2021*. Data in this table reflects these changes.

⁵ New York's decrease in school participation was driven by school consolidation in the school district New York City Chancellor's Office, and did not cause a corresponding decrease in the number of children attending community eligibility schools.

⁶ Oregon's participation data for the 2020–2021 school year has been updated by the State agency since the publication of *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, 2020–2021*. Data in this table reflects these changes.

TABLE 3: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate by Schools' Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for School Year 2021–2022¹

State	Total Adopting	Eligible: 40 – <50%	Adopting: 40 – <50%	Percentage Adopting: 40 – <50%	Eligible: 50 – <60%	Adopting: 50 – <60%	Percentage Adopting: 50 – <60%	Eligible: 60%+	Adopting: 60%+	Percentage Adopting: 60%+
Alabama	490	232	54	23.3%	157	91	58.0%	388	345	88.9%
Alaska	208	53	37	69.8%	61	57	93.4%	126	114	90.5%
Arizona	493	277	100	36.1%	268	198	73.9%	228	194	85.1%
Arkansas	259	168	102	60.7%	129	98	76.0%	78	59	75.6%
California	3,730	1,025	364	35.5%	1,675	1,333	79.6%	2,252	2,033	90.3%
Colorado	100	225	28	12.4%	146	59	40.4%	58	13	22.4%
Connecticut	420	83	73	88.0%	123	119	96.7%	228	228	100.0%
Delaware	114	52	50	96.2%	56	55	98.2%	11	9	81.8%
District of Columbia	183	28	27	96.4%	40	40	100.0%	91	91	100.0%
Florida	1,462	380	65	17.1%	371	99	26.7%	2,204	1,298	58.9%
Georgia	873	227	93	41.0%	337	287	85.2%	526	493	93.7%
Hawaii	106	36	32	88.9%	19	17	89.5%	60	57	95.0%
Idaho	64	59	42	71.2%	13	12	92.3%	11	9	81.8%
Illinois	1,823	426	126	29.6%	434	295	68.0%	1,478	1,400	94.7%
Indiana	506	323	55	17.0%	285	175	61.4%	349	276	79.1%
Iowa	176	143	8	5.6%	149	92	61.7%	96	76	79.2%
Kansas	31	112	10	8.9%	70	20	28.6%	41	1	2.4%
Kentucky	1,061	129	103	79.8%	339	328	96.8%	639	630	98.6%
Louisiana	1,095	182	147	80.8%	383	369	96.3%	533	532	99.8%
Maine ²	75	Not Reported	Not Reported	—	Not Reported	Not Reported	—	Not Reported	Not Reported	—
Maryland	357	139	82	59.0%	105	90	85.7%	199	185	93.0%
Massachusetts	718	127	67	52.8%	164	140	85.4%	526	510	97.0%
Michigan	1,468	452	157	34.7%	476	346	72.7%	1,023	965	94.3%
Minnesota	150	86	23	26.7%	83	51	61.4%	123	72	58.5%
Mississippi	376	39	18	46.2%	68	56	82.4%	296	292	98.6%
Missouri	433	154	75	48.7%	138	112	81.2%	258	244	94.6%
Montana	147	53	39	73.6%	32	30	93.8%	72	69	95.8%
Nebraska	45	149	11	7.4%	85	14	16.5%	117	20	17.1%
Nevada	388	92	74	80.4%	92	88	95.7%	191	189	99.0%
New Hampshire	0	9	0	0.0%	4	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%
New Jersey	319	204	65	31.9%	143	86	60.1%	180	167	92.8%
New Mexico	556	89	57	64.0%	341	321	94.1%	182	178	97.8%
New York	3,021	392	257	65.6%	310	261	84.2%	2,587	2,503	96.8%

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TABLE 3: Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Take-Up Rate by Schools' Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for School Year 2021–2022¹

State	Total Adopting	Eligible: 40 – <50%	Adopting: 40 – <50%	Percentage Adopting: 40 – <50%	Eligible: 50 – <60%	Adopting: 50 – <60%	Percentage Adopting: 50 – <60%	Eligible: 60%+	Adopting: 60%+	Percentage Adopting: 60%+
North Carolina	879	332	97	29.2%	366	255	69.7%	584	507	86.8%
North Dakota	37	7	6	85.7%	9	9	100.0%	19	19	100.0%
Ohio	1,062	295	217	73.6%	272	231	84.9%	636	612	96.2%
Oklahoma	326	278	140	50.4%	170	132	77.6%	90	50	55.6%
Oregon	588	328	206	62.8%	225	136	60.4%	178	73	41.0%
Pennsylvania	1,172	113	99	87.6%	222	215	96.8%	877	858	97.8%
Rhode Island	61	26	5	19.2%	30	23	76.7%	35	33	94.3%
South Carolina	538	187	116	62.0%	235	214	91.1%	203	199	98.0%
South Dakota	110	39	22	56.4%	23	20	87.0%	68	68	100.0%
Tennessee	845	241	163	67.6%	585	556	95.0%	148	126	85.1%
Texas ³	3,740	1,260	345	27.4%	1,405	823	58.6%	3,022	2,390	79.1%
Utah	42	12	7	58.3%	25	19	76.0%	23	16	69.6%
Vermont	59	52	38	73.1%	14	13	92.9%	10	8	80.0%
Virginia	1,008	346	336	97.1%	437	437	100.0%	231	231	100.0%
Washington	482	316	151	47.8%	244	173	70.9%	187	157	84.0%
West Virginia	593	141	130	92.2%	181	179	98.9%	217	217	100.0%
Wisconsin	498	281	48	17.1%	188	125	66.5%	351	325	92.6%
Wyoming	13	3	2	66.7%	2	2	100.0%	9	9	100.0%
U.S. Total	33,300	10,402	4,569	43.9%	11,729	8,901	75.9%	22,039	19,150	86.9%

¹In 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 Arizona, 25 schools in D.C., one school in Idaho, two schools in Illinois, 47 schools in Louisiana, one school in Massachusetts, four schools in Minnesota, 10 schools in Mississippi, two schools in Missouri, nine schools in Montana, 37 schools in Nevada, one school in New Jersey, 20 schools in North Carolina, three schools in North Dakota, two schools in Ohio, 173 schools in Oregon, nine schools in South Carolina, 165 schools in Texas, four schools in Virginia, one school in Washington, 67 schools in West Virginia). These schools are not included in the total number of adopting schools by each ISP category.

² Maine did not report the identified student percentages that community eligibility schools use for claiming federal reimbursements for meals served.

³ Texas did not report ISP data for 17 schools listed as participating in community eligibility for the 2021–2022 school year.

The data referenced in footnotes 1, 2, and 3 account for the difference between the U.S. total number of adopting schools and the total number of adopting schools by identified student percentage category.

TABLE 4: Student Enrollment for School Years (SY) 2014–2015,¹ 2015–2016,^{2,3} 2016–2017,⁴ 2017–2018,⁵ 2018–2019,⁶ 2019–2020,⁷ 2020–2021,⁸ and 2021–2022^{9,10,11}

State	Enrollment SY 2014–2015	Enrollment SY 2015–2016	Enrollment SY 2016–2017	Enrollment SY 2017–2018	Enrollment SY 2018–2019	Enrollment SY 2019–2020	Enrollment SY 2020–2021	Enrollment SY 2021–2022	Change SY 2020–2021 to SY 2021–2022
Alabama	180,789	196,802	195,853	208,748	208,929	208,068	101,387	222,189	120,802
Alaska	27,666	29,234	34,106	36,575	37,244	36,560	38,089	33,465	-4,624
Arizona	30,763	55,048	94,229	116,488	145,273	178,535	193,750	171,028	-22,722
Arkansas	791	20,060	55,605	71,475	80,732	91,510	104,128	103,678	-450
California	113,513	435,900	748,533	799,646	1,690,225	1,944,304	2,207,703	2,174,949	-32,754
Colorado	12,455	34,920	36,198	39,244	39,950	39,028	40,165	33,404	-6,761
Connecticut	66,524	105,547	110,322	118,067	151,552	175,155	208,824	206,444	-2,380
Delaware	46,096	50,837	56,306	58,154	62,920	61,047	61,156	58,917	-2,239
District of Columbia	47,013	51,524	56,143	58,085	62,424	61,909	65,025	62,651	-2,374
Florida	274,071	474,006	579,138	705,602	858,135	872,443	913,549	933,123	19,574
Georgia	354,038	420,383	467,411	472,296	490,319	510,532	494,963	524,495	29,532
Hawaii	2,640	4,650	20,150	28,750	28,994	27,747	33,120	48,964	15,844
Idaho	18,828	32,299	33,058	33,898	28,876	21,953	21,646	22,852	1,206
Illinois	552,751	672,831	685,101	725,241	731,062	762,195	804,574	793,894	-10,680
Indiana	96,604	117,187	127,405	136,855	172,969	224,192	247,399	241,398	-6,001
Iowa	32,103	46,021	50,589	53,880	67,192	81,424	83,660	83,234	-426
Kansas	5,992	19,641	22,661	25,722	26,338	26,038	13,563	10,912	-2,651
Kentucky	279,144	385,043	436,419	479,450	501,059	522,512	539,460	532,628	-6,832
Louisiana	146,141	217,496	341,492	455,318	399,190	493,727	523,957	518,791	-5,166
Maine	5,284	17,977	20,411	20,435	23,733	19,975	Not Reported	Not Reported	—
Maryland	7,624	94,496	99,484	103,814	106,218	102,788	171,613	173,972	2,359
Massachusetts	134,071	200,948	238,872	260,364	282,030	301,465	274,211	330,684	56,473
Michigan	266,249	275,579	273,071	287,801	418,447	466,540	544,806	541,554	-3,252
Minnesota	20,688	49,944	57,003	57,957	63,057	51,818	53,982	50,873	-3,109
Mississippi	136,095	148,781	151,815	147,677	164,297	145,097	162,110	158,523	-3,587
Missouri	106,126	111,319	121,962	134,996	139,884	143,692	142,542	142,654	112
Montana	15,802	21,161	23,290	26,180	24,777	21,741	22,340	20,656	-1,684
Nebraska	180	2,425	4,277	7,411	7,276	6,173	12,100	12,090	-10
Nevada	7,917	15,970	71,345	95,001	100,957	218,746	293,179	271,504	-21,675
New Hampshire	0	644	1,125	1,082	1,100	652	621	0	-621
New Jersey	99,840	107,277	127,108	140,199	153,533	144,312	143,586	143,264	-322
New Mexico	119,300	149,057	164,569	177,388	175,756	186,116	187,301	176,450	-10,851
New York	505,859	528,748	603,795	1,586,981	1,646,409	1,742,005	1,719,661	1,755,995	36,334
North Carolina	310,850	357,307	367,705	433,204	418,820	455,237	463,666	415,375	-48,291
North Dakota	5,284	5,661	5,698	6,039	6,525	7,424	9,420	9,420	0
Ohio	305,451	354,727	363,860	397,594	409,467	410,400	412,116	416,274	4,158

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TABLE 4: Student Enrollment for School Years (SY) 2014–2015,¹ 2015–2016,^{2,3} 2016–2017,⁴ 2017–2018,⁵ 2018–2019,⁶ 2019–2020,⁷ 2020–2021,⁸ and 2021–2022^{9,10,11}

State	Enrollment SY 2014–2015	Enrollment SY 2015–2016	Enrollment SY 2016–2017	Enrollment SY 2017–2018	Enrollment SY 2018–2019	Enrollment SY 2019–2020	Enrollment SY 2020–2021	Enrollment SY 2021–2022	Change SY 2020–2021 to SY 2021–2022
Oklahoma	43,433	66,323	104,162	148,994	152,695	154,078	99,447	123,293	23,846
Oregon	103,601	129,635	130,336	129,766	122,553	133,615	240,052	245,362	5,310
Pennsylvania	327,573	394,630	426,984	470,275	509,073	540,877	565,014	556,188	-8,826
Rhode Island	838	6,531	10,350	16,675	18,043	30,915	32,220	31,774	-446
South Carolina	111,453	173,364	201,587	235,711	249,036	255,006	265,027	254,439	-10,588
South Dakota	13,056	14,626	15,981	15,499	19,409	18,332	20,310	20,824	514
Tennessee	417,165	436,821	428,424	437,641	389,163	382,428	367,184	362,507	-4,677
Texas	941,262	1,015,384	984,976	1,184,559	1,566,088	1,873,513	2,111,019	2,088,076	-22,943
Utah	7,019	8,565	8,880	12,353	20,148	20,900	19,194	15,159	-4,035
Vermont	7,386	12,751	13,508	13,946	13,768	12,053	12,239	13,045	806
Virginia	42,911	99,404	119,051	156,687	204,610	241,056	385,041	512,500	127,459
Washington	53,369	69,432	75,357	95,514	110,815	126,278	158,518	195,397	36,879
West Virginia	124,978	145,057	177,875	195,075	208,960	209,566	212,362	225,803	13,441
Wisconsin	133,232	146,330	156,519	158,325	165,513	172,782	188,219	189,098	879
Wyoming	1,255	1,255	1,370	1,500	1,886	1,931	2,043	1,928	-115
U.S. Total	6,663,073	8,531,558	9,701,469	11,780,137	13,677,429	14,936,390	15,987,261	16,231,697	244,436

¹ Data for the 2014–2015 school year are from *Take Up of Community Eligibility This School Year* (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, February 2015).

² Data for the 2015–2016 school year are from *Community Eligibility Adoption Rises for the 2015–2016 School Year, Increasing Access to School Meals* (Food Research & Action Center and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, updated May 2016).

³ *Community Eligibility Adoption Rises for the 2015–2016 School Year, Increasing Access to School Meals* (Food Research & Action Center and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, updated May 2016) contains data on enrollment in community eligibility schools in Guam. *Community Eligibility Continues to Grow in the 2016–2017 School Year* (Food Research & Action Center, March 2017) excludes Guam; therefore, the U.S. totals for the 2015–2016 school year have been adjusted.

⁴ Data for the 2016–2017 school year are from *Community Eligibility Continues to Grow in the 2016–2017 School Year* (Food Research & Action Center, March 2017). 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.

⁵ Data for the 2017–2018 school year are from *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2018–2019* (Food Research & Action Center, May 2019). 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.

⁶ Data for the 2018–2019 school year are from *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2018–2019* (Food Research & Action Center, May 2019). Some schools did not provide student enrollment information for the 2018–2019 school year: four schools in Hawaii, 182 schools in Louisiana, 25 schools in Mississippi, 14 schools in South Carolina, and three schools in Utah.

⁷ Data for the 2019–2020 school year are from *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2019–2020* (Food Research & Action Center, May 2020). Some schools did not provide student enrollment information for the 2019–2020 school year: 19 schools in Alabama, 11 schools in California, four schools in the District of Columbia, five schools in Indiana, two schools in Louisiana, seven schools in Maine, two schools in Massachusetts, 10 schools in Michigan, one school in Nevada, four schools in Oregon, 18 schools in South Carolina, one school in South Dakota, five schools in Texas, and one school in Virginia.

⁸ Data for the 2020–2021 school year are from *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2020–2021* (Food Research & Action Center, June 2021). Some schools did not provide student enrollment information for the 2020–2021 school year: eight schools in Alabama, 43 schools in California, six schools in Florida, eight schools in Georgia, one school in Idaho, one school in Louisiana, 149 schools in Massachusetts, two schools in Michigan, three schools in Missouri, one school in New Mexico, 115 schools in New York, four schools in South Carolina, five schools in Tennessee, eight schools in Texas, one school in Washington.

⁹ Some schools did not provide student enrollment information for the 2021–2022 school year: 17 schools in Alabama, three schools in Alaska, one school in Colorado, one school in Idaho, two schools in Kentucky, four schools in Louisiana, one school in Maryland, one school in Montana, one school in North Carolina, two schools in Oregon, three schools in Tennessee.

¹⁰ Maine did not report student enrollment data for the 2020–2021 or 2021–2022 school years.

¹¹ The total number of students enrolled in CEP schools for the 2020–2021 school year has been updated from the original publication of *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2020–2021* (Food Research & Action Center, June 2021) to reflect the revised data provided by the Louisiana Department of Education.

TABLE 5: Number of Schools Adopting the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for School Years (SY) 2014–2015,¹ 2015–2016,² 2016–2017,³ 2017–2018,⁴ 2018–2019,⁵ 2019–2020,⁶ 2020–2021, and 2021–2022⁷

State	Adopting SY 2014–2015	Adopting SY 2015–2016	Adopting SY 2016–2017	Adopting SY 2017–2018	Adopting SY 2018–2019	Adopting SY 2019–2020	Adopting SY 2020–2021	Adopting SY 2021–2022	Change SY 2020–2021 to SY 2021–2022
Alabama	347	392	391	425	444	445	454	490	36
Alaska	123	137	174	213	208	208	216	208	-8
Arizona	73	133	227	296	372	446	500	493	-7
Arkansas	4	57	139	178	201	229	255	259	4
California	208	651	1,070	1,311	2,833	3,275	3,777	3,730	-47
Colorado	34	82	91	101	105	105	108	100	-8
Connecticut	133	212	228	241	307	364	426	420	-6
District of Columbia	96	107	115	116	119	115	116	183	67
Delaware	95	108	117	116	212	116	166	114	-52
Florida	548	831	1,001	1,142	1,356	1,374	1,440	1,462	22
Georgia	589	700	768	787	818	834	819	873	54
Hawaii	6	25	43	65	69	68	80	106	26
Idaho	50	88	92	92	82	61	62	64	2
Illinois	1,041	1,322	1,363	1,499	1,541	1,588	1,693	1,823	130
Indiana	214	253	283	287	362	462	515	506	-9
Iowa	78	110	119	123	156	176	177	176	-1
Kansas	18	64	69	72	75	70	44	31	-13
Kentucky	611	804	888	948	984	1,028	1,060	1,061	1
Louisiana	335	484	741	968	1,016	1,029	1,087	1,095	8
Maine	21	59	72	71	87	73	73	75	2
Maryland	25	227	228	242	242	238	364	357	-7
Massachusetts	294	462	525	574	613	685	720	718	-2
Michigan	625	662	652	715	1,105	1,259	1,466	1,468	2
Minnesota	56	125	153	154	163	146	153	150	-3
Mississippi	257	298	333	342	410	337	390	376	-14
Missouri	298	330	367	402	420	427	432	433	1
Montana	93	127	138	158	157	150	154	147	-7
Nebraska	2	9	15	26	26	26	43	45	2
Nevada	13	36	122	153	167	316	399	388	-11
New Hampshire	0	2	3	3	4	3	3	0	-3
New Jersey	197	227	270	306	331	319	315	319	4
New Mexico	343	429	487	535	546	568	574	556	-18
New York	1,246	1,351	1,561	3,381	3,565	3,481	3,633	3,021	-612
North Carolina	648	752	787	914	882	941	955	879	-76
North Dakota	23	24	25	26	29	31	37	37	0

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TABLE 5: Number of Schools Adopting the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) for School Years (SY) 2014–2015,¹ 2015–2016,² 2016–2017,³ 2017–2018,⁴ 2018–2019,⁵ 2019–2020,⁶ 2020–2021, and 2021–2022⁷

State	Adopting SY 2014–2015	Adopting SY 2015–2016	Adopting SY 2016–2017	Adopting SY 2017–2018	Adopting SY 2018–2019	Adopting SY 2019–2020	Adopting SY 2020–2021	Adopting SY 2021–2022	Change SY 2020–2021 to SY 2021–2022
Ohio	739	842	918	998	998	1,022	1,025	1,062	37
Oklahoma	100	184	301	413	427	408	306	326	20
Oregon	262	340	346	344	341	353	622	588	-34
Pennsylvania	646	795	861	959	1,031	1,112	1,171	1,172	1
Rhode Island	1	10	21	34	37	58	61	61	0
South Carolina	226	348	412	471	515	531	531	538	7
South Dakota	142	109	124	89	97	97	102	110	8
Tennessee	862	924	909	914	836	840	831	845	14
Texas	1,477	1,665	1,678	2,070	2,716	3,250	3,700	3,740	40
Utah	22	28	29	35	52	51	54	42	-12
Vermont	32	56	60	68	62	53	56	59	3
Virginia	87	206	255	341	428	511	782	1,008	226
Washington	122	172	193	232	273	314	394	482	88
West Virginia	369	428	492	518	540	545	558	593	35
Wisconsin	348	381	415	422	438	468	494	498	4
Wyoming	5	5	7	10	11	14	14	13	-1
U.S. Total	14,184	18,173	20,678	24,900	28,809	30,620	33,407	33,300	-107

¹ Data for the 2014–2015 school year are from *Take Up of Community Eligibility This School Year* (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, February 2015).

² Data for the 2015–2016 school year are from *Community Eligibility Adoption Rises for the 2015–2016 School Year, Increasing Access to School Meals* (Food Research & Action Center and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, updated May 2016).

³ Data for the 2016–2017 school year are from *Community Eligibility Continues to Grow in the 2016–2017 School Year* (Food Research & Action Center, March 2017).

⁴ Data for the 2017–2018 school year are from *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2018–2019* (Food Research & Action Center, May 2019).

⁵ Data for the 2018–2019 school year are from *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2018–2019* (Food Research & Action Center, May 2019).

⁶ Data for the 2019–2020 school year are from *Community Eligibility: The Key to Hunger-Free Schools, School Year 2019–2020* (Food Research & Action Center, May 2020).

⁷ See Table 2 for full notes on adopting schools in the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 school years.



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