



## **Categorical Eligibility Proposed Rule Change: Impact on kids and school meals**

The [proposed rule change](#) to Categorical Eligibility for SNAP would increase child hunger by limiting access to school meals for students, in addition to cutting families off of SNAP.

### **What is being proposed?**

The USDA is proposing to **lower the income level and limit assets** families can have in order to qualify for SNAP. This proposal would take food away from 3.1 million people across the United States and would immediately cut an estimated **66,000 Oregonians** from SNAP benefits because of proposed changes. Over time, it is anticipated that the number of Oregonians ineligible for SNAP would increase as rule changes are implemented. In the current policy environment, 1 in 5 Oregon children experience food insecurity. With this proposed rule change, this number is likely to increase.

### **Eligibility for Free School Meals**

- Many children will lose their *automatic approval* for free school meals as children in families who receive SNAP are “directly certified” for participation.
- Families who had *automatic approval* for free school meals based on SNAP will have to start filling out an annual application for free and reduced-price school meals.
- Though Oregon provides funding for families the “reduced-price” category and these impacted families will likely still be eligible for meals at no charge, filling out a school meals application for is a barrier for families.
- Eligible kids may miss out on meals because of the stigma, fear, and hassle associated with the application.

### **Impact on Universal Free School Meals**

- The proposed change would shrink the number of schools that qualify and currently offer *universal free meals* to all their students through a federal mechanism called *Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)*.
- Eligibility for CEP is based on family participation in federal programs, including SNAP and TANF. The provision states at least 40% of students at the school or district must be “directly certified” by these programs for the school to qualify to feed all students at no charge.
- As families lose SNAP, some schools will lose CEP, no matter how many individual families go and fill out a school meal application. That means cuts to your neighbor’s SNAP benefits could result in all students in your community losing access to no charge meals through the CEP.
- School meal debt is on the rise in Oregon. That will only get worse if the proposed changes take effect as fewer schools will qualify for the CEP.

### **Impact on New Hunger-Free Schools provisions in the Student Success Act**

The [Hunger-Free Schools provisions](#) increase students’ access to school meals at no charge by increasing the number of schools able to participate in CEP and expand the number of households eligible for free meals through state funds. Fewer schools will likely be able to offer *universal free school meals*, as lower SNAP participation makes schools either ineligible for the CEP or means that the CEP isn’t a financially viable option. The proposed SNAP changes could also increase the cost of Hunger-Free School provisions to the state, which could limit their long term feasibility.

Visit <https://oregonhunger.org/fight-snap-cuts-cat-el/> to learn more and make a comment opposing this proposed rule.