



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

Comments extended through Friday, November 1

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?

This proposal would take away food assistance (SNAP) for up to 50,000 households in Oregon and 3.1 million people nationwide. **That's one in seven households in Oregon currently participating in SNAP.** Currently 1 in 5 Oregon children experience food insecurity. With this proposed rule change, this number is likely to increase. It does this by proposing to **lower the income level and limit assets** families can have in order to qualify for SNAP.

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 will miss out on meals because of the stigma, and fear associated with applying.

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

Oregon’s new landmark [Hunger-Free Schools provisions](#) passed in 2019 will boost 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. The proposed rule would mean fewer schools can offer *universal free school meals* (CEP), 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 the policy’s long term feasibility.

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