



MEAL CHARGE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to address the need for school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to institute and clearly communicate a meal charge policy, which may include, if applicable, the availability of alternate meals. Because all students in participating schools may receive reimbursable school meals, all SFAs must have a policy in place for children who are participating at the reduced price rate or paid rate, but either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. Such a policy ensures that school food service professionals, school administrators, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations in these situations.

Recognizing that unpaid charges place a financial strain on the food service department, the goals of this standard practice are:

- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts
- To support positive situations with district staff, district business policies, student and parent/guardian to the maximum extent possible.
- To establish policies that are age appropriate.
- To encourage parent/guardian to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student.
- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges.

Families are encouraged to apply for free and reduced price meal benefit. Any family that falls into a negative balance will receive a written notification to encourage them to apply for free or reduced price meal benefits. In accordance with the guidelines for participation and the wishes of the District, no child who a teacher believes is improperly nourished will be denied a free lunch, breakfast, milk, or other food simply because proper application has not been received from his/her parents or guardians.

Families are encouraged to pre-pay for meals and money is accepted in the school office daily for payments on the day of service. Families will be notified of the school Unpaid Meal Charge Policy in writing before the school year begins and with each new transfer student. This policy will also be posted on the Food Service Website.

The number of meal charges per student is limited to five meals regardless of a students' status as full-paid or reduced priced. Students surpassing these requirements may be offered an alternative meal of a cheese sandwich and milk at no charge. To the extent possible, the District will utilize dedicated available resources to provide regular meals to all students.

On a weekly basis, low balance slips are handed out to students who have a positive lunch account less than enough to pay for five lunches. Slips are mailed via US Postal mail to the parents/guardians of students who have reached a zero or negative balance.

Delinquent account notices are mailed weekly to students who have accumulated a negative balance equivalent to five lunch charges informing them of their account status and that failure to make payment or acceptable payment arrangements may result in implementation of the alternative meal the following week. As a service to our families, email notifications can be set in the food service accounting program to offer an additional source of information regarding account balances.

[Amended 06/11/2018]