

School Meal Payments

The district is committed to ensuring that all students receive the nutrition they need to engage in active learning during the school day. In accordance with applicable federal guidance from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), this policy is intended to serve the purposes of meeting student needs, minimizing the identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals and maintaining the fiscal integrity of the district's school food service account.

Student meal accounts and meal charges

Student meal accounts shall be established by the district.

Parents will be encouraged to pre-pay for students paying full or reduced price for meals. The district shall ensure that parents have access to at least one no-cost method of paying for meal services, such as the ability to pay in person.

Students will be permitted to pay for meals and/or add funds to student accounts on the day of service.

If a student has money to purchase a full or reduced price meal at the time of the meal service, the student must be provided a meal. The student's money may not be used to repay previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that day's meal.

A meal account balance remains with the student until the student is no longer enrolled in the district. Students with unused credit in their accounts at the point of disenrollment or graduation will receive a refund in the amount of the credit.

Students paying full or reduced price for meals and who do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of a meal at the time of service will be permitted to charge a meal. However, these students will be denied permission to charge à la carte or "extra" items, such as a second milk or additional entrée.

Students and staff may charge up to \$50 per school year before the student or staff member will no longer be permitted to charge meals. Students at the meal charge maximum will be provided a complimentary replacement meal. Students will be limited to 10 complimentary replacement meals per school year.

Notification of low or negative balances

Notification of a low balance on a student account will be provided privately by email or phone call from the school office that includes the amount that constitutes a "low" balance and payment reminders.

When notified of a low balance on a student account, parents will be reminded of this policy and the process for submitting applications for free or reduced price meal benefits. Parents will also be notified that any school meal debt accrued prior to the district's determination that the student is eligible for free or reduced lunch remains the parent's responsibility.

Notification of a negative balance on a student account will be provided by email or phone call from the school office. Payment will be requested when the balance in a student's account is less than \$.0. Payment will be expected within one (1) week.

Collection of meal charge debt

In collecting debt, the district shall ensure that collection efforts do not have a negative impact on the students involved and instead focus on the adult(s) in the household responsible for providing funds for student meal purchases. The district will work with parents to establish repayment plans with payment levels and due dates appropriate to the household's particular circumstances.

For students with delinquent meal charges, the following process will be used to collect debt:

Returned Checks and Past Due Collections

The District understands that unexpected financial hardships can occur and is willing to work with people to satisfy payments. We encourage parents who may find themselves in unanticipated financial circumstances to contact the principal before the situation becomes unmanageable and the District seeks assistance from outside collection agencies.

There will be a charge of \$20 for each check written to the district and returned due to non-sufficient funds or closed accounts. Reimbursement for returned checks and fees must be made in cash, money order or cashier's check. After the District has returned two checks from any party, no further checks will be accepted for any District fees or activities.

Past due items will incur an interest rate of 18% per annum. When a past due item is turned over to a collection agency, the individual will be responsible for the past due balance, returned check fees, interest to the District, and be liable for all costs associated with the collection of these amounts. These costs include but are not limited to collection and legal fees.

Collection efforts from one school year may continue into the following school year, including when students transfer to a school outside of the district.

Annual notice

The District shall notify students and their parents about this policy at the beginning of each school year. Notification shall also be provided to those students who transfer into the district during the school year. Information about this policy may also be included in student handbooks, student enrollment or registration packets and/or back-to-school packets and posted on district and school websites.

This policy will also be communicated to school and district-level staff responsible for this policy's enforcement, such as school food service staff responsible for collecting payment for meals at the point of service, staff involved in notifying families of low or negative balances, and staff involved in enforcing any other aspects of this policy.

Issue date: June 1, 2018

LEGAL REF.: USDA Guidance SP 46-2016 (*requires written policy regarding unpaid meal charges*)