

## CHARGING SCHOOL MEALS

The Board of Education recognizes that on occasion, students may not have enough funds for a meal. To ensure that students do not go hungry, but also to promote responsible student behavior and minimize the fiscal burden to the district, the Board will allow students who do not have enough funds to “charge” the cost of meals to be paid back at a later date subject to the terms in this policy.

To comply with State guidelines and maintain a system for accounting for charged meals, regarding both full and reduced-price meals, the Board shall:

1. allow only regular reimbursable meals to be charged, meaning what is on the menu, excluding extras, a la carte items and snacks, to be charged;
2. limit the number of charges to three per student;
3. use a computer-generated point of sale system, which identifies and records all meals, collects repayments, and sends balance notifications.

Charged meals must be counted and claimed for reimbursement on the day that the student charged (received) the meal, not the day the charge is paid back. When charges are paid, these monies are not to be considered “a la carte” transactions, as a section on the daily cash report or deposit summary reads “charges paid.”

Students eligible for free meals shall not be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from other cafeteria purchases. No student with unpaid charges will be prohibited from purchasing food if they have money that day.

Before denying any student a meal for abusing the policy, school food authorities (SFAs) shall carefully consider the negative consequences of such an action. Refusing very young children or students with disabilities is prohibited by the Board.

If SFAs suspect that a student may be abusing this policy, written notice will be provided to the parent that if he/she continues to abuse this policy, the privilege of charging meals will be refused.

The district’s payment system allows for automatic replenishment when a balance reaches a certain amount set by the parent/guardian and viewing and tracking of student purchases. The district shall encourage parents to utilize these options.

The school lunch manager will periodically review and analyze student account balances, select balances for notification, and discretely notify parents of any balance due, the process to refill an online account (if applicable), and the district's policy on charging school meals. This notification will continue regularly until the account is replenished. Parents must repay all unpaid charges remaining at the end of the year or before their child leaves the district, whichever occurs first.

The district shall discretely notify parents of students regularly with negative balances of the application process for free and/or reduced meals. If a parent regularly fails to provide meal money and does not qualify for free or reduced price meals, the district may take other actions as appropriate, including notifying the local department of social services if neglect is suspected.

The school district shall notify all parents/guardians in writing on an annual basis at the start of the school year and to families transferring during the year, outlining the requirements of this policy. The policy shall also be published in appropriate school and district publications. All staff involved in implementing and enforcing this policy shall also be notified of these requirements and their responsibilities.

#### Unpaid Meal Charges and Debt Collection

Unpaid meal charges are a financial burden to the district and taxpayers, and can negatively affect the school program. Unpaid meal charges shall be considered "delinquent" as per the district's accounting practices. The district shall attempt to recover unpaid meal charges before the end of the school year, but may continue efforts into the next school year. Students in grades 9-12 with unpaid meal charges at the start of the year may not be able to charge meals. The district shall notify parents/guardians of unpaid meal charges at regular intervals, and may engage in collection activities. The district shall offer repayment plans, and may take other actions that do not result in harm or shame to the child, until unpaid charges are paid.

#### Account Balances

Remaining funds will be carried over to the next school year. When students leave the district or graduate, the district will attempt to contact the parent/guardian to return remaining funds if the balance is greater than \$10. Parents/guardians may request that funds be transferred to other students (e.g. siblings, unpaid accounts). All transfer requests must be in writing. Unclaimed funds remaining after three months shall be absorbed by the school meal account.

Staff

Staff members are allowed to purchase food from the district's food services. However, all purchases must be paid for at the point of sale. Staff members are not allowed to charge meals to be repaid later.

Ref: 42 USC §1779 (Child Nutrition Act of 1966)  
 42 USC §§1758(f)(1); 1766(a) (National School Lunch Act)  
 2 CFR §200.426 (accounting for debt in federal programs)  
 7 CFR §§210.9 210.12; 210.19; 220.13; 245.5 (accounting in federal school meal programs)  
Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (Public Law 111-296), §143  
USDA Report to Congress, *Review of Local Policies on Meal Charges and Provision of Alternate Meals*, June 2016, [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/unpaidmealcharges-report.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/unpaidmealcharges-report.pdf)  
*Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies*, USDA FNS Memo SP 46-2016 (07/08/16), [www.fns.usda.gov/unpaid-meal-charges-local-meal-charge-policies](http://www.fns.usda.gov/unpaid-meal-charges-local-meal-charge-policies)  
*Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A*, USDA FNS Memo SP 57-2016 (09/16/16), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP57-2016os.pdf>  
*Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A*, USDA FNS Memo SP 23-2017 (03/23/17), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP23-2017os.pdf>  
*Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments*, USDA FNS Memo SP 47-2016 (07/08/16), [www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP47-2016os.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP47-2016os.pdf)  
*Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge - Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools*, USDA FNS Guidance Document (May 2017), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP29-2017a1.pdf>  
*Student Meal Charge Policy*, NYSED Guidance Memo, (5/30/17), <http://www.cn.nysed.gov/content/student-meal-charge-policy>

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