

STUDENT NUTRITION SERVICE MANAGEMENT (STUDENT MEAL CHARGES)

Unless meals are provided at no charge, the district expects students to pay for meals prior to or at the time of receipt. The ability to charge meals is a privilege, not a right, and is subject to the limitations established in this procedure.

Notice

At the beginning of each school year, a copy of this procedure will be provided to every parent/guardian in the district as required by law. In addition, a copy of this procedure, along with information about free and reduced-price school meals, will be provided to the parents/guardians of all students who enroll after the beginning of the school year.

A copy of this procedure will also be provided to all building administrators, staff responsible for collecting payment for meals at the point of service, staff involved with notifying parents/guardians about account balances, school social workers, nurses, counselors, the district liaison for homeless children and youths, and any other staff who regularly assist students in need.

A copy of this procedure will also be posted on the district's website, and information about charging meals will be included in the student handbook.

Students

1. Parents are notified by email or school letter when accounts reach \$8.00 or less. This is intended as an early notification to allow funds to be deposited before a student reaches a negative balance.
2. Once an account balance exceeds negative \$10.00, or negative \$5.00 for reduced paying student to account for lesser charge per meal, an administrator may contact the parent and speak privately with the student to in regards to a plan for repayment.
3. There will not be an alternate breakfast or lunch provided. Students with a negative balance will continue to receive a regular meal and be charged accordingly.
4. Students may not charge a` la carte items while their account is negative.
5. A student with money in hand will not be denied a meal even if the student has past due charges.
6. Students will not be identified, singled out, shamed or punished by the district for the failure of their parents/guardians to pay for or provide meals, and the district will not withhold student records in violation of law.

Outreach

After a student accumulates three unpaid meal charges, the district may encourage the parents/guardians to submit an application for free and reduced-price meals if an application has not been recently submitted, and the student will be referred to an administrator or counselor for intervention. The administrator or counselor may:

1. Meet with the student to assess to the extent possible whether the student or the student's family is experiencing hardships, barriers or other circumstances with which the counselor could assist.
2. Make repeated attempts to contact the parents/guardians to notify them of the lunch charges, discuss the situation and any other concerns the official may have after meeting with the student, and resolve the situation.
3. Encourage the parents/guardians to submit the free and reduced-price meals application and inquire about any assistance that might be needed to complete the application.
4. Provide other resources as applicable.

District employees are mandated by the state of Missouri to report any instances of suspected abuse or neglect to the Children's Division (CD) of the Department of Social Services. District personnel will report to the CD any instance where a student's arrival at school with no provision for food leads to a reasonable cause to suspect neglect.

Working with Parents/Guardians

To ensure that parents/guardians have ample opportunity to resolve situations involving unpaid meal charges, the district will:

1. Provide timely notification to parents/guardians when account balances run low (\$8.00 threshold) and each time their student charges a meal resulting in a negative balance.
2. Parent notifications regarding a negative balance will be sent on a weekly basis.
3. Work with parents/guardians to create a payment plan that allows for the payment of accumulated balances over time.

Debt Collection

Delinquent Debt

Unpaid meal charges will be considered a delinquent debt 90 days after notice that charges are due when no payment or payment plan agreement has been made. Unpaid charges will be considered delinquent as long as the district determines the debt is collectible and efforts to collect the debt are ongoing. The district will make reasonable efforts to collect delinquent debt, including turning over unpaid meal charge balances to a collection agency when the superintendent or designee determines such action is in the best interest of the district. The district's Nonprofit School Food Services Account (NSFSA) funds may be used to cover the cost of reasonable efforts to collect delinquent debt, including costs associated with using a collection agency.

Bad Debt

When the district determines that collection of delinquent debt is impossible or too costly, the debt will be reclassified as bad debt. Bad debt is debt that will be written off as an operating cost. These costs must be restored using non federal funds. NSFSA resources may not be used to cover any costs related to bad debt. Instead, local funds will be used to cover the costs. Local funds include:

1. State revenue matching funds in excess of state revenue matching-fund requirements.
2. State and local funds provided to cover the cost of student meals.
3. Local contribution from organizations or individuals.
4. Revenue from adult meals prepared using resources outside the district's food service and not funded by the NSFSA.
5. Revenue from the sale of a` la carte items and profits from foods not purchased with NSFSA funds and funded by an account separate from the NSFSA.

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Fort Zumwalt School District, O'Fallon, Missouri