



## **NUTRITION SERVICES DEPARTMENT PROCEDURE MEAL CHARGES**

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### **Purpose:**

According to the Federal OMB A-87 Circular Appendix B part 5, the Child Nutrition Program is not allowed to use federal funds to offset meal charges to students.

A negative balance is when a student owes money for a meal that has not been paid for. This negative balance is considered a charge against the meal account.

### **General Guidelines**

- Parents are to be informed that meals can be prepaid and positive balances maintained in the child's account to minimize the possibility that the child may be without meal money.
- A student balance may only go negative for service of a complete meal. Students may not go into a negative balance for ala-cart items.
- Staff/Adults may purchase meals, however negative balances will not be permitted.

### **Students in a Free or Reduced meal status**

Students with an approved meal application for free or reduced meal benefits will not incur any negative charges as the district does not collect money for meal from benefit eligible students for meals.

### **Students in a Paid meal status**

#### ***All levels: School Sites***

- Students are allowed to charge up \$10.00 into a negative balance. Only complete meals will allowed to be charged.
- Nutrition Services staff will inform students at the point of sale when the balance on their account approaches zero to remind students they need to bring money to avoid a negative balance.
- Once the threshold for negative balance has been reached, an alternate meal will be served in place of the item for the day on the menu. (An Alternate meal will consist of a cheese sandwich on whole grain bread, student choice of fruit &/or vegetable portion and 1% low-fat white milk.)
- Parents will be notified of student charges at a minimum of weekly by sending notification to parent via the student backpack.
- Email, Text & Phone call home via the "parent call system" when student carries a negative balance equal or greater than .50 cents. Parent notification will utilize the district auto-dialer information stored in the Student Information System that is maintained by the school district.

## **NUTRITION SERVICES PROCEDURE MEAL CHARGES- Cont.**

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### **Procedures for collection of funds**

It is the intent that collection of meal charges be a collaborative effort with Nutrition Services, office staff, and site administration.

Elementary cafeteria food service workers will identify students who have reached the charge limit by printing letters to households of negative balances through the automated point of service terminal and send home notifications by printing notifications and distributing to teachers confidentially by placing sealed notification into teacher inbox. Teachers will send the notifications home with the student via the backpack.

Nutrition Services will send automated notifications via email, text and phone message to all households through the parent notification system. Messages will be sent twice a week to notify families of the negative balance beginning when the student is .50 or more in the negative.

Nutrition Services will print a usage report of alternate meals for each school site. This will allow Nutrition Services to identify students that may need additional resources to complete meal applications.

### **Parent Dispute**

If a parent is not in agreement with the charge balance, the cafeteria worker will print out a student transaction which will show each of the charges on the student account or direct parent to the online resource. The cafeteria will discuss with the parent and refer to the Nutrition Services office as needed.

### **Student Transfer/Withdrawal**

Student account balances will transfer with the student, within the district.

The District Student information system will automatically download information to Nutrition Services as the school site offices input information.

Students with a positive balances may request a refund of the entire cafeteria fund balance or transfer the balance to another student account within the district. Student Cafeteria fund balances, for those students who have withdrawn or graduated from the district, will be made available for refund for one complete school year after student has withdrawn or graduated from district. After the one year time has expired the funds will become part of the district.

### **Meal Charge Recovery**

Each fiscal year Nutrition Services will charge the General Fund for all negative meal balances to recover any bad debt. The bad debt will then become the responsibility of the general fund to collect. Nutrition Service will then return the individual student meal balance in the computer system from a negative amount to \$0.00.