



NUTRITION SERVICES DEPARTMENT PROCEDURE MEAL CHARGES

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.
- Parents may apply for meal benefits at any time.
- 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 from eligible students for meals.

Students in a Paid meal status

All levels: School Sites

- Students who present to the cafeteria for meal service and do not have funds to cover the meal are allowed to charge to their account and therefore the account will maintain a negative balance. Parents and/or guardians will be liable for these charges.
- 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.
- Parents will be notified of student charges and the opportunity to apply for meal benefits at a minimum of weekly by sending notification to parent via the student backpack.
- Email, text and phone call to the student contact via the "parent call system" when student carries a negative balance equal to 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.

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Procedures for collection of funds

It is the intent that collection of meal charges be a collaborative effort with parents, 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 and phone message to all households through the parent notification system. Messages will be sent three times a week to notify families of the negative balance and the ability and procedure for completing a meal application if needed. .

Nutrition Services will periodically print a report of negative balances 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.