



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.
- 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.
- Per state regulations, children will not be denied a meal. The meal served without funds will be charged to the student unpaid meal balance in which the parent/guardian is still responsible to pay.

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 the co-pay for meals served to a student in a reduced status. Note: Charges incurred prior to an approved application will still be considered as an unpaid balance and are due to Nutrition Services.

Students in a Paid meal status

All levels: School Sites

- 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.
- Parents will be notified of student charges at a minimum of weekly by sending notification to parents via mail from Nutrition Services.
- 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.
- Parents / Guardians of students with a negative balance may be contacted personally by Nutrition Services or a school site official with the purpose to collect unpaid meal balances.

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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.

Nutrition Services central office will identify students who have reached a negative balance and will print letters to households of negative balances through the automated point of service terminal and send home notifications to households by mail to maintain confidentiality.

Nutrition Services will send automated notifications via email, text and phone message to all households through the parent notification system. Messages will be sent a minimum of twice a week to notify families of the negative balance beginning when the student is .50 or more in the negative. Messages also contain information on how to apply for meal benefits as needed.

Nutrition Services will review negative balances in the central office 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 Nutrition Services Lead 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 Nutrition Services lead 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 from school site to school site, within the district. The District student information system will automatically download information to Nutrition Services as the school site offices input information.

Requesting Student Balance Refund

Students with positive account balances may request a refund of the entire cafeteria fund balance or transfer the balance to another student meal account within the district upon graduation or departure from 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.