



## Nutrition Services Department Local Meal Charge Procedures

### I. PURPOSE:

To establish consistent meal charge procedures throughout the Rosemead School District.

### II. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY:

- **Nutrition Services Department (NSD):** Responsible for providing meal applications to all households, completing regular Direct Certification (DC) matches to qualify students who automatically qualify for free or reduced-price meals through their participation in other assistance programs (such as CalFresh, CalWORKs, and Medi-Cal), maintaining charge records and notifying parents/guardians of outstanding meal account balances.
- **School Principals:** Responsible for working with the NSD to obtain meal applications for students exhibiting financial hardship. In the event that a household does not complete a meal application and has demonstrated a financial hardship, the school Principal may complete a meal application on the household's behalf. Principals will also be enlisted to help with debt collection if the notification procedure (listed below) is not successful.
- **District:** Responsible for supporting the NSD in collection of debt and reconciliation of accounts.
- **Parents/Guardians:** Responsible to either submit a meal application each school year to determine eligibility (unless they receive DC notification) or, if the household does not qualify for free or reduced-price meals or does not wish to complete a meal application, parents/guardians are responsible to monitor the meal account balance and to provide immediate payment of any outstanding meal debt.

### III. MEAL BENEFIT ELIGIBILITY

A new meal application is needed every school year to determine household eligibility for the free and reduced-price meal program. Approximately one month prior to the start of school, all enrolled families receive a meal application packet by mail. Households can apply using a paper application or online at [www.schoolcafe.com](http://www.schoolcafe.com)

Students without a current application on file by the end of September of each year are notified via automated phone message and asked to submit a new meal application. Efforts continue throughout the school year to obtain meal applications from students who exhibit financial hardship.

Households can reapply at any time during the school year. If household conditions change, such as an increase in household size or a decrease in income, a household might qualify for the program and is encouraged to reapply with the updated information.

#### **IV. MEAL CHARGES**

All students, regardless of eligibility status, will receive a reimbursable meal when he/she goes through the meal service line. Students who do not qualify for free or reduced-price meals and who have a balance at or below \$0.00, are allowed to charge up to three regular lunch meals. After three regular lunch meals are charged, and if money has not been deposited into the student's meal account to cover the negative balance, the student will receive a reimbursable alternate meal and those meals will continue to be charged to the student's meal account at the paid rate of \$2.25 per lunch.

#### **V. ALTERNATE MEALS**

An alternate lunch meal will consist of a cheese sandwich, peanut butter & jelly sandwich, or other pre-determined entrée item regularly included on the serving line, along with a choice of fruit and/or vegetables from the salad bar, and 1% or non-fat white milk. As with all reimbursable meals, the student must take at least three components, including at least ½ cup fruit and/or vegetable. An alternate meal will be provided until the student's meal balance is paid in full or a repayment plan has been agreed upon by the District and parent/guardian.

To prevent overt identification and "meal shaming", all components of an alternate meal will be offered on the serving line, meaning that any student could choose to select the items.

#### **VI. MONITORING**

NSD employees will review student accounts daily as students pass through the meal service line. NSD employees are trained annually on preventing overt identification. NSD employees will not communicate meal balances with students unless a student asks about his/her account balance. NSD employees are encouraged to contact the NSD office if there are any questions or concerns about a student's meal account.

Parent/Guardians can monitor their child's meal account activity and balance by creating a free account online at [www.schoolcafe.com](http://www.schoolcafe.com)

#### **VII. NOTIFICATION:**

The NSD Account/Clerk runs a weekly account balance report to identify which students have a balance below \$0.00. Households with a negative account balance are notified via automated phone message (weekly) and/or notification letter mailed to the address on file (biweekly).

#### **VIII. DEBT COLLECTION**

In cases of repeated nonpayment, the Parent/Guardian will be contacted to determine the reason(s) for the nonpayment, to determine if the household qualifies for the free or reduced-price meal program, and to discuss details of repayment.

The District's efforts to collect debt shall be consistent with district policies and procedures, California Department of Education guidance, and 2 CFR 200.426. The District shall not spend more than the actual debt owed in efforts to recover unpaid meal charges. At the end of the school year, the remaining unallowable bad debt will be invoiced to the General Fund to restore the Nutrition Service Food Service Account.