

Food Service Management (Meal Charges) EF-AP1

Unless meals are provided at no charge, the district expects students and employees to pay for meals prior to or at the time of receipt. The district allows limited meal charges to cover the situation of a student losing or forgetting meal money. This service is not designed or intended to provide a credit service for continuous charging and collection of student meals. 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 administration, 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.

Employees

Employees may charge meals, but may not accumulate more than \$25 in unpaid meal charges. No substitute meal will be provided. All meal charges must be paid before the last day of school.

Students

1. A student may not accumulate more than twenty-five dollars (\$25) in unpaid charges for complete meals.
2. Students may not charge a la carte items.
3. A student with money in hand will not be denied a meal even if the student has past due charges.
4. 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.

Alternative Meals - Elementary Students

If the district's meal service line is designed to collect payment prior to students receiving food, a student who has accumulated more than twenty-five dollars (\$25) in unpaid meal charges and is still unable to pay for meals may be provided an alternative meal. Alternative meals will be on the regular serving line and will be available to all students as an alternative to the regular meal. If a student has been provided a regular meal, that meal will not be taken away from the student even if the student should have been provided an alternative meal due to unpaid meal charges.

Alternative Meals - Secondary Students

A student who has accumulated more than twenty-five dollars (\$25) in unpaid meal charges and is still unable to pay will not be provided a meal. The exception to this, will be for students who are identified as having a disability.

Meal accounts will continue to accrue charges for alternative meal costs.

Interventions

1. After a student accumulates more than twenty-five dollars (\$25) in unpaid meal charges, the district will encourage the parents/guardians to submit an application for free and reduced-price meals if an application has not been recently submitted.
2. The district will make repeated attempts to contact the parents/guardians to notify them of the lunch charges and to discuss the situation.
3. Provide other resources as applicable.

District employees are mandated by the state of Missouri to report any instance 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 situation involving unpaid meal charges, the district will:

1. Provide timely notification to parents/guardians of account balances for meals over five (\$5) dollars.
2. 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 meal charges will be considered delinquent as long as the district determines that 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 (NSFA) funds may be used to cover the costs 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 contributions 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.
6. Revenues from catering or contracting services that operate from an account separate from the NSFSA.

Records

The district will maintain detailed records pertaining to delinquent and bad debt, including:

1. Evidence of efforts to collect unpaid meal charges.
2. Evidence that collection efforts fell within the time frame and methods established by this procedure.
3. Financial records showing when delinquent debt became bad debt.
4. Evidence that funds written off as bad debt were restored to the NSFSA from non federal sources.