

RICHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

WELLNESS-NUTRITION SERVICES OPERATIONS AND MEAL CHARGES

I. PURPOSE

The Administrative Guidelines outlined within this document are intended to create a nutrition services operational environment that protects and promotes the nutritional health of our students. Our commitment is to ensure that our district provides students with healthy meals with the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day. We further commit to providing district employees, families and students with a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. These guidelines seek to minimize identification of students with insufficient account balances to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the nutrition services program.

II. BELIEFS

Richfield Public Schools believes that healthy school meals enable all students to achieve at their highest level, and we are committed to offering a variety of nutritional offerings to meet the individual needs of our students.

III. PAYMENT OF MEALS

We strongly encourage all families to complete the Application for Educational Benefits each school year to determine eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch. Families may complete the Application for Educational Benefits anytime throughout the year to reflect any changes that may impact determination of eligibility. Each household is financially responsible for all charged meals consumed by their child either before the approval of an application, after the denial of benefits for income over the USDA guidelines, or the election to not fill out an application. We will use every possible outreach strategy to inform all families about the need to provide money for student meals. We send out a notification and instruction postcard to each household during the second week of August annually.

A. Every student has a meal account. When the balance in their meal account reaches zero, a student will continue to receive meals with a full choice of school-provided full, reimbursable meal options. When the balance reaches zero however, students will not be allowed to charge for additional entrees or a la carte items until funds are available in the account to cover the cost of the additional entrees or a la carte items. Under no circumstances shall any student be turned away from a USDA meal of their choice. Under no circumstances shall any student receive restricted choice related to USDA meal options provided to students.

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2 B. Under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, full meals will be available without charge to
3 all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals
4 regardless of account balance. Additionally, a full meal will be available to all
5 students regardless of lunch balance. Under no circumstances shall any
6 student be turned away from a USDA meal of their choice. Under no
7 circumstances shall any student receive restricted choice related to USDA
8 meal options provided to students.
9
- 10 C. When a lunch account has a negative account balance, a la carte, snack
11 and/or double entree items will not be available regardless of paid, free or
12 reduced-price lunch status.
13

14 **IV. NOTIFICATION OF LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCE**

- 15
- 16 A. The district will make reasonable efforts to notify families and employees of a
17 low account balance when the account has a negative balance via the
18 district's automated alert notification system.
19
- 20 B. Parents will receive a negative balance notification when their student's
21 account has a negative balance, twice per week via the district's automated
22 alert notification system.
23
- 24 C. Point of Sale Clarifications
- 25
- 26 1. All reasonable efforts shall be made to communicate meal balances at
27 locations other than the point of sale.
28
- 29 2. At the point of sale, nutrition services staff may clarify to students
30 reimbursable meal requirements. For example, nutrition staff may inform
31 students that an entrée, drink and side are required for the meal to qualify
32 as a fully qualified, reimbursable meal.
33
- 34 3. At the point of sale, any information shared with students shall occur with
35 concern for the dignity of the student. Under no circumstances shall
36 communication occur that shames the student or that could attract the
37 attention of other students during the communication. Staff may only use
38 a voice that can be heard only by the individual student.
39
- 40 4. Staff shall communicate that an account balance is getting low when the
41 balance falls below \$3.00. For example, nutrition staff may use words that
42 include, that the lunch account balance is getting low. Staff may only use
43 a voice that can be heard only by the individual student.
44
- 45 5. Staff shall communicate that an account is negative and needs attention
46 when the account balance is negative.
47
- 48 6. If this communication cannot be accomplished discretely then it is not to
49 take place.
50

1 7. When an account balance falls below -\$10.00 communication from the
2 nutrition staff will cease.
3
4

5 **Elementary Students:**
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- 7 1. Printed statements will go home in the backpacks on Friday of each week for
8 all lunch balance accounts that have a negative balance.
9
10 2. Automated calls, texts and/or emails will be sent two times per week for all
11 meal accounts with a negative balance. These will be sent using the contact
12 information provided to the district by the legal guardian of the student.
13
14 3. No students will be denied a meal. Under no circumstances shall any student
15 be turned away from a USDA meal of their choice. Under no circumstances
16 shall any student receive restricted choice related to USDA meal options
17 provided to students. Nutrition services staff will work weekly with building
18 leadership and/or the school social worker to communicate information
19 related to all accounts that have a balance at negative \$25 or below. Families
20 will receive increased communication and follow up coordinated through
21 building level administration when the account has a balance of negative
22 \$25.00 or below until payment is received or the legal guardian contacts
23 nutrition services at (612) 798-6072 or (612) 798-6071. Personal
24 communication with families will occur only through building level
25 administration, social worker or administrative designee. Administrative
26 coordination with outreach workers will occur for communication with Non-
27 English speaking families. Nutrition services staff will not communicate
28 directly with families.
29
30 4. When a meal account is negative \$50.00 or below, building level
31 administration or social workers will contact parents to discuss the situation
32 and provide additional resources.
33

34 **Secondary Students:**
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- 36 1. Students can check their meal account balance or deposit money at any
37 point of sale register at both the high school and middle school.
38 Parents/guardians are encouraged to sign up for an online account and
39 password to monitor all of their child's accounts. Parents should also have
40 online access to transaction details, balances and payment.
41
42 2. Automated calls, texts and/or emails will be sent two times per week for all
43 meal accounts with a negative balance. These will be sent using the contact
44 information provided to the district by the legal guardian of the student.
45
46 3. No students will be denied a meal; Under no circumstances shall any
47 student be turned away from a USDA meal of their choosing. Under no
48 circumstances shall any student receive restricted choice related to USDA
49 meal options provided to students. Nutrition services staff will work weekly
50 with building leadership and/or the school social worker to communicate

1 information related to all accounts that have a balance at negative \$25 or
2 below. Families will receive increased communication and follow up
3 coordinated through building level administration when the account has a
4 balance of negative \$25.00 or below until payment is received or the legal
5 guardian contacts nutrition services at (612) 798-6072 or (612) 798-6071.
6 Personal communication with families will occur only through building level
7 administration, social worker or administrative designee. Administrative
8 coordination with outreach workers will occur for communication with Non-
9 English speaking families. Nutrition services staff will not communicate
10 directly with families.
11

- 12 4. When a meal account is negative \$50.00 or below, building level
13 administration or social workers will contact parents to discuss the situation
14 and provide additional resources.
15
16 5. If all verbal and written communication attempts to the household do not
17 result in a payment and the student meal account has a balance of negative
18 \$50.00 or below, the student may also incur limited access to other school
19 enrichment activities such as dances, special field trips or special events as
20 determined by the school administrator until communication from the
21 household is received and a plan is established for payment on the account.
22 Any decisions of this nature will require specific review and written approval
23 of the superintendent prior to implementation. Students will not be restricted
24 from curriculum-based programs or activities.
25
26

27 **V. POINT OF SALE CLARIFICATIONS**
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- 29 A. All reasonable efforts shall be made to communicate meal balances at
30 locations other than the point of sale.
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32 B. All reasonable efforts shall be made to have the point of sale occur prior to
33 the selection of items.
34
35 C. At the point of sale, nutrition services staff may clarify to students
36 reimbursable meal requirements. For example, nutrition staff may inform
37 students that an entrée, drink and side are required for the meal to qualify as
38 a fully qualified, reimbursable meal.
39
40 D. At the point of sale, any information shared with students shall occur with
41 concern for the dignity of the student. Under no circumstances shall
42 communication occur that shames the student or that could attract the
43 attention of other students during the communication.
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45 **VI. COMMUNICATION CLARIFICATIONS**
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- 47 A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families
48 to resolve any unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be
49 encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children. This

1 communication will only come from the school social worker, building level
2 administrator or designee.

3
4 B. Nutrition services employees shall not be expected to communicate
5 information related to collection of meal debt. This communication will be
6 from the school social worker, building level administrator or designee.

7
8 C. The school district will not enlist the assistance of non-school district
9 employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.

10
11 D. The school district will not deny any student the opportunity to participate in
12 graduation ceremonies, other commencement activities or any academic
13 based programming due to unpaid meal charges.

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15 **VII. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY**

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17 A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information will be provided in
18 writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packets, student handbook, etc.)
19 to:

- 20
21 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
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23 2. students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time
24 of enrollment; and,
25
26 3. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this
27 policy.

28
29 B. The school district will post the policy on the school district's website, in
30 addition to providing the required written notification described above.
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32 **Legal References:**

33 Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4 42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy
34 and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
35 7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)
36 7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
37 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges:
38 Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
39 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges:
40 Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
41 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges:
42 Guidance and Q&A
43 Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169j (May 14, 2019) (*Letter to Ricker*)
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