

School Meal Payments

The district is committed to ensuring that all students receive the nutrition they need to engage in active learning during the school day. In accordance with applicable federal guidance from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), this policy is intended to serve the purposes of meeting student needs, minimizing the identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals and maintaining the fiscal integrity of the district's school food service account.

Student meal accounts and meal charges

Student meal accounts shall be established by the district.

Parents will be encouraged to pre-pay for students paying full or reduced price for meals. The district shall ensure that parents have access to at least one no-cost method of paying for meal services, such as the ability to pay in person.

Students will be permitted to pay for meals and/or add funds to student accounts on the day of service.

If a student has money to purchase a full or reduced price meal at the time of the meal service, the student must be provided a meal. The student's money may not be used to repay previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that day's meal.

Students paying full or reduced price for meals and who do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of a meal at the time of service will be permitted to charge a meal. However, these students will be denied permission to charge à la carte or "extra" items, such as a second milk or additional entrée.

Students may charge up to 5 full lunches per school year before the student will no longer be permitted to charge meals. Students at the meal charge maximum will be provided a complimentary replacement meal.

Notification of low balances

Notification of a low balance on a student account will be provided privately by "low" balance and payment reminders, such as payment notices sent directly to the parent's email address, telephone calls, and/or automated text messages or emails sent from an online system.

When notified of a low balance on a student account, parents will be reminded of this policy and the process for submitting applications for free or reduced price meal benefits. Parents will also be notified that any school meal debt accrued prior to the district's determination that the student is eligible for free or reduced lunch remains the parent's responsibility.

Notification and collection of meal charge debt

Notification of a negative balance on a student account will be provided by notices sent directly to the parents' email address, including expected payment dates and collection efforts.

In collecting debt, the district shall ensure that collection efforts do not have a negative impact on the students involved and instead focus on the adult(s) in the household responsible for providing funds for student meal purchases. The district will work with parents to establish repayment plans with payment levels and due dates appropriate to the household's particular circumstances.

For students with delinquent meal charges, the following process will be used to collect debt. Kitchen managers will initiate the collection process with a phone call to the parent/guardian at least weekly. If no payment is received, the nutrition services staff will email statements of the negative account balance to the parent/guardian and/or mail a paper copy of the statement to the family's address. If no payment is made on the account, school administration will assist with the debt collection process by meeting with the parent/guardian and/or mailing a letter to the family. Collection efforts from one school year may continue into the following school year.

Uncollectible delinquent debt

Uncollectible debt – Fountain Fort Carson School District 8 considers student accounts uncollectible when collection efforts have been unsuccessful for six (6) months after a student leaves the district. Repayment of uncollectible debt is an unallowable expense for the district; therefore, payment for uncollectible bad debt must come from others sources such as the district's general fund or donations.

Refunds and Donations

Households may request a refund of their student(s) meal account(s) at any time or may transfer/donate unused meal balances to another student's account, as specified. Per federal regulations prepayments for students eligible for free or reduced meal pricing must be refunded to the household.

Donations made to benefit nutrition services which do not specify a particular student will be deposited to the general fund and will be used to offset uncollectible debt.

Annual notice

The district shall notify students and their parents about this policy at the beginning of each school year. Notification shall also be provided to those students who transfer into the district during the school year. Information about this policy may also be included in student handbooks, student enrollment or registration packets and/or back-to-school packets and posted on district and school websites.

This policy will also be communicated to school and district-level staff responsible for this policy's enforcement, such as school food service staff responsible for collecting payment for meals at the point of service, staff involved in notifying

families of low or negative balances, and staff involved in enforcing any other aspects of this policy.

Adopted: June 14, 2017

Revised: January 30, 2019

LEGAL REF.: USDA Guidance SP 46-2016 (*requires written policy regarding unpaid meal charges*)

Fountain-Fort Carson School District #8, Fountain, Colorado