

Board Policy

Meal Charging and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming

It is the goal of Eastern Suffolk BOCES to provide students with access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a student whose parent/person in parental relation has unpaid meal charges is not shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent/person in parental relation does not have unpaid meal charges.

Unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on ESBOCES. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed, or embarrassed.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout ESBOCES in a way that does not stigmatize, distress, or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and snack meals only. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

Access to Meals

Free meal benefit eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Reduced meal benefit eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice for \$.25 and lunch of their choice for \$.25 each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent/person in parental relation has specifically provided written permission to ESBOCES to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Full-pay students will pay for meals at the ESBOCES published paid meal rate each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent/person in parental relation has specifically provided written permission to ESBOCES to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Ongoing Staff Training

Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the State Education Department (SED) Webinar or the ESBOCES training program.

Staff training will include ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

Parent Notification

Parents/persons in parental relation will be notified that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted and has accrued unpaid meal charges within thirty (30) days of the charge and then every thirty (30) days thereafter.

Parent Outreach

Staff will communicate with parents/persons in parental relation with five or more unpaid meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

Staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/persons in parental relation to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.

Staff will contact the parent/person in parental relation to offer assistance with completion of meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the student to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

Minimizing Student Distress

Staff will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student in line for a meal or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.

Students with unpaid meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or other work to pay for meals.

Staff will not throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous unpaid meal charges.

Staff will not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid meal charges.

Staff will deal directly with parents/persons in parental relation regarding unpaid meal charges.

Ongoing Eligibility Certification

Staff will conduct direct certification through the New York Student Identification System (NYSSIS) or using SED Roster Upload at least monthly to maximize free eligibility.

Staff will provide parents/persons in parental relation with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in the school enrollment packet.

ESBOCES will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.

ESBOCES will use its administrative prerogative to complete an application on a student's behalf judiciously, and only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the student's parent/person in parental relation. ESBOCES will complete the application using only available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.

ESBOCES will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, and runaway coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students.

Prepaid Accounts

Students/parents/persons in parental relation may pay for meals in advance via www.ezschooldpay.com or with a check payable to *Eastern Suffolk BOCES*. Further details are available on the ESBOCES website at [www.esboces.org/Programs and Services/Special Education/School Lunch Program](http://www.esboces.org/Programs%20and%20Services/Special%20Education/School%20Lunch%20Program). Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a student may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may be carried over to the next school year.

To obtain a refund for a withdrawn or graduating student, a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in the student's account must be submitted.

Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the ESBOCES Food Service Program.

First Adopted: 10/22/2014
Revised: 7/12/2017
Revised: 9/26/2018