

Simi Valley Unified School District Meal Charge Policy

Policy:

Policy for Students with Insufficient Funds for School Meals, Delinquent Accounts and Meal Collection Procedures in the School Nutrition Program.

Regulations:

2 CFR Part 200 Section 143 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act 2010
EC 49557.5; CDE Nutrition Services Management Bulletin SNP-22-2019

The National School Lunch Program is integral in ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals to support their academic success. It is also imperative to protect the financial stability of the school nutrition program. The intent of this policy is to establish a process and procedure to handle situations when children eligible for reduced-price or full-price meal benefits have insufficient funds to pay for school meals; as well as for the collection of unpaid meal charges.

Purpose:

The goal of the Simi Valley Unified School District is to provide students with healthy meals each day. However, unpaid charges place a financial burden on our Child Nutrition department. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with state and federal reporting requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program, and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

The intent of this policy is to establish uniform meal procedures throughout the Simi Valley School District. The provision of this policy pertains to regular priced school lunches. The USDA Child Nutrition Program does not require that a student who pays for regular priced meals be served a meal without payment. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure their child has sufficient funds on their account to cover all school meals and to keep abreast of their child's account. Cafeteria accounts are not meant to accrue a negative balance; they are meant for adding money onto the student account and enable student meal purchases.

Free/Reduced Price Meal Applications:

At the beginning of every school year, we conduct a process that automatically qualifies families for free/reduced price meals. A notice will be sent home in the mail before the first day of school. If you received a letter stating that your child qualifies for **free** or **reduced-price** meals, you do not need to complete an application. Please make sure all students in your family are included in the letter. If a child is missing, please contact the office of Child Nutrition at terri.mikulus@simivalleyusd.org or 805-306-4500 ext. 4702. We can help make any changes.

All families will receive a meal application at the start of each school year, in their enrollment packet. Participation in the Free/Reduced Priced Meal Program is voluntary. If you choose to pay full price for your student, no application is necessary.

Please make sure all family members in the household are included on the application. Benefits are calculated based on family size and income. Please complete only one (1) application per household. Once the application is received by the Child Nutrition department, we have 10 days to process your application. We will send a notification that states if you qualify for benefits or do not qualify for benefits. The letter also states your income that you reported on the application. If the income is incorrect or you did not add all household members, please contact the Child Nutrition department at or 805-306-4500 ext. 4702.

If a student qualified for Free/Reduced benefits last year, the family has 30 school days to submit their new application before paying full-price for meals. Families are responsible for payment of full-price meals if they do not have a new application on file. In addition, families are responsible for payment of full-price meals for new or transferring students until the application is received and processed.

To fill out an application, please go to the Child Nutrition website below:

- 1) To complete an online or print a paper application, go to: <https://www.simivalleyusd.org/food>, applications can be found on the right side of the page.
- 2) Enrollment packets are sent home at the beginning of the school year includes the free/reduced-price meals application. You may complete this paper application and submit to your school site. You can also deliver or mail the completed application to the following address:

Simi Valley Unified School District—Child Nutrition
101 W. Cochran St.
Simi Valley, CA 93065

Student Cafeteria Accounts:

There is no overt identification of a student's eligibility at the cafeteria Point of Sale. All students are treated equally. If a student forgets or does not have enough money for a meal, we will provide a reimbursable meal and it will be charged to the student account based on the student's eligibility status. Parents/Guardians are responsible for payment of these charges. **It is not the intention of SVUSD to allow students to charge meals without parent consent.** There are situations when a student requires a cafeteria meal: lunch forgotten at home; lunch from home has been dropped, trampled, or swarmed with ants, etc. **If a parent does not want their student to purchase meals from the cafeteria, please call the office of Child Nutrition at 805-306-4500 ext. 4702.**

Meals/Meal Accommodations:

SVUSD uses "Offer versus Serve," which requires a student to take mandated meal components. At breakfast, four components are offered and students must take three items. At lunch, five components are offered (protein, grain, fruit, vegetable, milk) and three must be taken. All meals must meet government mandated standards and nutritional requirements. If a student is observed to not have all the necessary components to make the meal compliant, they are asked to take the additional servings to complete the meal. If a student refuses to comply, they will be charged full price for the meal.

If a parent or guardian requests a meal accommodation, every effort will be made to fulfill the request. Medical statements must be completed and signed by a physician.

Charge Policy:

Full Pay Students – Elementary, Middle and High School

Pay for meals at the district's published rate; elementary \$3.00, middle school and high school \$4.00. Prepaid meal credits can be purchased by checks made out for \$25.00 or more, cash or use our pre-payment on-line system My School Bucks, which can be accessed at www.mySchoolBucks.com. This system allows families to monitor account balances and add money electronically from a computer or a mobile device. Parents can also track their student's purchases without adding money to the account.

Free Meal Benefits

Free status students receive free breakfast and lunch, they must have money on account or cash to purchase a la carte items or second meals.

Reduced Meal Benefits

Reduced status students will be allowed to receive a breakfast for \$.30 and lunch for \$.40 every day.

Collection Procedures:

Students and their parents/guardians shall be notified when the cafeteria account has a low or negative balance. Households shall be notified by the following methods:

- 1) Automated phone call when a student's account balance is at \$8.00 and once the account goes negative.
- 2) Once Per Week: automated phone call and e-mail notification will be sent when a student's account is negative. Frequency of calls may increase, as needed.
- 3) One Time Per Month: paper notification will be mailed to families who owe \$15.00 or more.
- 4) One Time Per Month: Child Nutrition staff will call families who owe \$50.00 or more.

Students with negative balances may NOT charge or purchase (in cash) a la carte items such as water, sports drinks, and chips until meal debt has been resolved.

All cafeteria debts MUST be paid in full by the end of each school year. If a student has a positive balance, it will be rolled over into the next school year.

The District's efforts to collect debt shall be consistent with district policies and procedures, California Department of Education (CDE) guidance, and 2 CFR 200.426. The district shall not spend more than the actual debt owed in efforts to recover unpaid meal charges. For more information regarding unpaid/uncollected negative balances, please go to the California Department of Education (CDE) Nutrition Services Division Management Bulletin SNP-03-2017 Unpaid Meal Charges and Excess Account Balances at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/sn/mbsnp032017.asp>. You can also contact the Child Nutrition department at 805-306-4500 ext. 4702.

Refunds:

Refunds are made only upon completion of the Refund Form and submitted to the cafeteria or the Child Nutrition Department. Elementary sites can refund on-site under \$10.00 if they have the money available, otherwise a check will be mailed to the parents. Middle and high schools can refund \$5.00 and under directly to the student, balances of over \$5.00 can be refunded to the student with the Refund Request form from parent. Balance over \$20.00 will be refunded by check with the Refund Request form from parent. Funds can also be transferred between siblings, this can be done by email or over the phone.

Donations:

At the end of each school year, the cafeteria accounts must balance to zero. If accounts have a negative balance, the State prohibits the cafeteria from absorbing this debt. The district becomes responsible for payment of these funds which takes away from vital spending activities such as, classroom expenses.

Donations for unpaid balances are accepted. The Child Nutrition department will provide donors with a thank you letter, a copy of the donor's check, and SVUSD Tax ID number (which signifies the District as a charitable organization for purposes related to donations).

October 28, 2019