

## **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 with cash, or with a check paid to the school or food service manager.

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.

A meal account balance remains with the student until the student is no longer enrolled in the district. Students with unused credit in their accounts at the point of disenrollment or graduation will receive a refund in the amount of the credit.

### **Students Charging Meals**

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.

Nutrition services will call parents and alert students that their balance is insufficient and their parent will need to call and set up a payment plan or an e-fund plan. The district may have alternative funds to help these parents that are having trouble paying.

### **Notification of low or negative balances**

Notification of a low balance on a student account will be provided privately by the kitchen manager via auto-dialer email and phone message, as well as a written note sent home in a sealed envelope at the elementary level in Thursday folders.

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.

### **Collection of meal charge debt**

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.

Accounts that have a balance owed at the end of the school year and that are in excess of \$50.00 will receive a notification that they will be sent to collections if payment arrangements are not made within 30 days.

**This collection status will not affect the meals served to a child.**

Collection efforts from one school year may continue into the following school year, including when students transfer schools within the district.

### **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.

This policy does not apply to staff meals or adult meals.

Adopted: December 12, 2017

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

Garfield School District No. Re-2 Rifle, Colorado

