

Lakewood City Schools – Meal Charge Procedure

Date Issued: _____

Effective Date: _____

Federal Requirement:

The purpose of this procedure is to address the need for school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to institute and clearly communicate a meal charge procedure, which would include, if applicable, the availability of alternate meals. Because all students in participating schools may receive reimbursable school meals, all SFAs must have a procedure in place for children who are participating at the reduced price or paid rate, but either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. Such a procedure ensures that nutrition service professionals, school administrators, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations in these situations.

Purpose:

This procedure is designed to provide consistent meal charging procedures throughout the district.

Procedure Goals:

1. Establish consistent district wide procedure regarding meal charges and collection of charges.
2. To encourage parents and guardians to assume responsibility for meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the students.
3. To treat all students and families with dignity and respect while fostering positive and constructive interactions between district staff and parents/guardians.

Responsibilities:

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are responsible for paying for all of their student's meal charges. Uncollected meal charges shall be handled the same as any other school debt. Repeated failure to address meal charges may result in referral to an agency for collection. All meals eaten before a free or reduced-price meal application is processed and approved are the responsibility of the parent and must be paid for in a timely manner. Parents are encouraged to

use [Payschools](#) to pay for meals and/or to track purchases made by their student(s). Parents, who wish to prohibit their students from charging meals, can contact the Nutrition Services Department.

Nutrition Services Department

The Nutrition Services Department is responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying the Treasurer's Office of outstanding balances. The Nutrition Services Department will issue a notice to parent(s) whose student(s) has a delinquent account. Automated emails and or phone calls will be sent to the parents/guardians of students with delinquent accounts on a bi-weekly basis informing them of their negative balance.

If a student has a negative balance of \$20.00 in their student account and does not have adequate money in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service, an alternative meal of the District's choice will be provided at no cost to the student.

School District

The School District is responsible for supporting the Nutrition Services Department in debt collection activities. Unpaid meal charges will be carried over at the end of the school year as a delinquent debt and collection efforts may continue into next school year.

Federal guidelines prohibit the Nutrition Services Department from writing off bad debts as a result of charged meals. Every effort will be made to collect for unpaid meals. While not all inclusive, these measures may include the following:

- An automated telephone call to the parent.
- An email sent to the parent.
- Principals, Secretaries, Family Resource Coordinators (FRC), or Nutrition Services Admin contacts parent(s) by phone
- Principals, Secretaries, Family Resource Coordinators (FRC), or Nutrition Services Admin send notices to place in teachers' mailboxes for students.
- School meal/lunch coordinator sends letters home from the Food Service Department.

When a student repeatedly comes to school without a meal from home or money to participate in the school meal program, such requests may indicate the family's need for free or reduced-price meals. School administrators should work with the family to apply for school meal benefits. School meal status is treated as a confidential matter and should not be a consideration for families considering applying for assistance.

This procedure for unpaid meal charges is designed to ensure that all students, who want to eat a school meal, receive a meal without impediment(s). This procedure should be reviewed with all school-level staff, including school nurses, school counselors, principals, assistant principals and other administrators.