



Unpaid Meal Charge and Debt Collection Process

Our Intent

The Grapeview School District's goal is to provide nutritious meals to students and to promote healthy eating habits. It is the expectation of the district that families will work with us to keep accounts in good standing and be accountable for meal charges accrued by their child(ren). We want mealtimes to be a positive experience for all students and will serve every child a well-balanced meal when they enter the line and request one. Because hunger is an impediment to learning, no child will be denied a school meal unless directed to by the child's parent/guardian.

Student Accounts and Parent Notifications

- The goal is for student accounts to remain positive
- All households are accountable for meal charges
- All account balances, positive or negative, carry over to the next school year
- Parents will be notified automatically of low balance and negative balance accounts through automated phone, text, and email messages

To support families in maintaining positive balances the Child Nutrition program will:

- **Provide accessible school meal deposit and payment option by:**
 - Accepting payment (cash or check) in the school office or paid electronically through the web
- **Notify parents directly of low and unpaid account balances using the district's communications system through:**
 - Automated low balance (below \$5.00) email notification
 - Automated unpaid meal balance emails for balances of -\$.01 or greater will be automatically generated at the time of overdraft
 - Letter and account balances (more than -\$10.00) mailed home from Child Nutrition
- **Ensure all eligible families are certified for free and reduced-price school meals by:**
 - Directly qualify eligible students through OSPI's Child Nutrition's Direct Certification process at least once monthly and upon new student enrollment
 - Before the start of each school year, the Free and Reduced Lunch Application will be available in Family Access and the online registration and enrollment portal. If families do not have access to the internet, paper copies will be available in the office during school hours. If household income or size changes, families can apply for meal benefits at any time during the school year

Meal Charges

- Child Nutrition will not delay nor deny a meal due to a student having insufficient funds, unless a written request has been received from the parent or guardian stating that their child is not allowed to charge meals. In this instance, if the child does not have lunch from home, and the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the child will be allowed to eat, **and the parent or guardian will be responsible for the lunch charge.**
- Students accessing meals with insufficient funds will be charged for each meal and parent/guardians notified. It will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to pay the charge and bring the student account to a positive balance.

Direct communication with households

All communication regarding unpaid meal balances will be directed to parents/guardians. Should a student ask about his or her meal account balance, Child Nutrition staff will communicate that information discreetly with the student.

Account Balance Refunds and Unclaimed Funds

Account balances for a student will be carried over to the next school year. If a student is graduating or withdrawing with a positive account balance, a refund request form may be submitted. Students that are withdrawing with a negative balance will be unable to receive a yearend report card. Unclaimed funds are turned over to the Washington State Department of Revenue.

Donated Funds

The Child Nutrition Office will equitably manage funds donated to offset unpaid student meal debts. The donated funds will be distributed throughout the district accounts according to district processes. The district welcomes families to donate excess funds left in their child's Child Nutrition account, except in the case of households approved for reduced-priced meal benefits whose accounts must be refunded per federal requirements.

Repaying an NSF Check (non-sufficient funds at bank)

If the district receives an NSF check from a household during the school year, district guidelines state that no further checks will be accepted by the district for that current year. In addition, the household will be responsible for any fees incurred by the district.

Collecting Unpaid Meal Debt

The Child Nutrition department will monitor unpaid account balances and work with families to understand the child and parents' situation to develop solutions to unpaid debt. The district will make reasonable efforts to collect delinquent (overdue) unpaid meal charges and will coordinate communications with families to resolve the charges. Meal account balances for a student will be carried over to the following school year.

When the district has exhausted all attempts to collect an unpaid balance, a debt collection agency may be utilized to collect the debt.

If a collection agency is used, a formal letter will be sent to the household notifying them that the debt will be turned over to collection. The household will then have 10 days to respond and pay the debt in

full or arrange for payment options. If there is no response after 10 days, the debt will be sent to collection.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online

at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
Program.Intake@usda.gov

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