



## Hopkinton Public Schools

# Unpaid Meal Charging Procedure

The Hopkinton Public Schools Food Service Department takes pride in providing nutritious and well-balanced meals to our students. At the start of the 2023-24 school year, Governor Healey and the Massachusetts Legislature made a historic investment and commitment to solving childhood hunger by making Massachusetts the 8th state to make School Meals for All permanent. What this means is that all students are entitled to one reimbursable breakfast and one reimbursable lunch at no cost each school day.

By statute, the District's Food Service Department is a self-supporting fund that shall not have a negative balance at the close of a fiscal year. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the Food Service Department and on the District's operating budget. To ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, the following meal and collection guidelines have been developed for all students in order for the lunch and breakfast programs to continue operating in a fiscally responsible manner.

- A strict, no charging policy, will be enforced commencing March 3, 2025
- Middle School and High School students with insufficient funds will be denied additional meals and/or a la carte items at the point of service
- No student, regardless of lunch account balance, will be denied their 1 reimbursable meal per meal period (*1 breakfast and 1 lunch per day, per student*)

### Key Terms

- **Reimbursable Meal Lunch:** A reimbursable meal contains at least three (3) of the five (5) offered meal components (grain, meat/meat alternative, fruit, vegetable, and milk). In addition, one of these components must be a fruit and/or vegetable.
- **Reimbursable Meal Breakfast:** A reimbursable meal that contains at least three (3) items offered through 3 (3) components (Grain, Fruit, and Milk. Meat/Meat Alternative may be substituted when the grain minimum is met. Vegetables may also be offered additionally). In addition, one of these components must be a fruit and/or vegetable.
- **Non-Reimbursable Meal:** Non-reimbursable meals are not part of the USDA School Nutrition Program. These meals cannot be charged and must be paid for at the time of sale with cash or check or via prepaid funds on account. A lunch that does not contain at least three (3) of the five (5) offered meal components (grain, meat/meat alternative, fruit, vegetable, and milk) and does not include a fruit and/or vegetable as one of those components is considered a non-reimbursable meal. A breakfast that does not include three (3) items from three (3) components (grain, fruit, and milk. Meat/Meat Alternative may be substituted when the grain minimum is met. Vegetables may also be offered additionally) and does not include a fruit and/or vegetable as one of those components is considered a non-reimbursable meal. Non-reimbursable meals do not qualify as a meal under Universal Free Meals.



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- **Second Meals:** An additional meal consisting of one (1) or more components of the offered meal sold on an a la carte basis. Second meals are not part of the USDA School Nutrition Program and do not qualify under Universal Free Meals. Second meals cannot be charged and must be paid at full price at the time of sale with cash, a check or pre-paid funds on account.
- **A la carte Items:** A snack, bottled water, juice, milk (priced individually, not part of a reimbursable meal) or any single component of a meal. A la carte items do not qualify under Universal Free Meals and must be paid for at the time of sale with cash, check payable to Franklin School Lunch or pre-paid funds on account.

### **Student Accounts**

The Food Service Department is responsible for ensuring that the School Meal/Lunch Accounts are properly managed and accurately reported. The cafeteria managers, kitchen supervisor and Food Service Clerk will monitor student school meal accounts with the goal of eliminating negative balances and delinquent accounts. When an account has a negative balance the kitchen supervisor or Food Service Clerk may e-mail a letter to the parent or guardian of the child. If no payment or collection is made, the Food Service Department or the School District will contact the parent or guardian in an attempt to settle or collect the unpaid balance. If there is a financial hardship, the Food Service Department will discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan and provide some additional resources that may be available for families.

The Food Service Department will make every effort to collect unpaid balances and will contact parents/guardians via email, regular postal mail or phone regarding deficit balances. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact food services directly to discuss payment options.

Student negative balance amounts are retained in the Food Service Department's point of sale system until resolved. That account information is available either online at MySchoolBucks.com or through the Food Service Department. Account balances are updated daily. Payments may take up to 24 – 48 hours to appear on the student's account and to update on the registers at the child's school, but usually credit to account within 15 minutes.

All outstanding school lunch account balances must be paid in full prior to the end of the school year. If further collection actions are needed, the Food Service Director will bring the issue to the School Principal and/or School Business Administrator for further collection actions. Thereafter, the Food Service Department will track negative balances and report them to the School Business Administrator prior to the close of the school year (June 30th). If necessary, the School Business Administrator shall cause a journal entry to be made to charge the uncollected debt to the School budget appropriation.

Please contact the Food Service Department, [mcondakes@hopkinton.k12.ma.us](mailto:mcondakes@hopkinton.k12.ma.us) if you have any questions about these guidelines.

*We thank you for your understanding and cooperation.*



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### **Non-Discrimination Statement:**

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

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:  
mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or  
fax:  
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or  
email:  
[program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.