

RICHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

WELLNESS - NUTRITION SERVICES OPERATIONS AND MEAL CHARGES

I. PURPOSE

The Administrative Guidelines outlined within this document for Richfield Public Schools are intended to create a nutrition services operational environment that protects and promotes the nutritional health of our students. Our commitment is to ensure that our District provides students with healthy meals with the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day. We further commit to providing District employees, families and students with a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. These guidelines seek to minimize identification of students with insufficient account balances to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the nutrition services program.

II. BELIEFS

Richfield Public Schools believes that healthy school meals enable all students to achieve at their highest level, and we are committed to offering a variety of nutritional offerings to meet the individual needs of our students.

III. PAYMENT OF MEALS

Richfield Public Schools participates in the Minnesota Free School Meals Program, and therefore, all enrolled students will be offered one breakfast and one lunch at no charge while at school regardless of an outstanding meal balance. Additional entrees and a la carte items are available to students for purchase. Each household is financially responsible for all charged additional entrees and a la carte items consumed by their child.

- A. Every student has a meal account. When the balance in their meal account reaches zero, a student will continue to receive meals with a full choice of school-provided, reimbursable meal options. When the balance reaches zero, however, students will not be allowed to charge for additional entrees or a la carte items until funds are available in the account to cover the cost of the additional entrees or a la carte items. Under no circumstances shall any student be turned away from a USDA meal of their choice. Under no circumstances shall any student receive restricted choice related to USDA meal options provided to students. Once a student has placed a meal on a tray or otherwise been served a meal, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, regardless of the student's meal account balance.

- 1 B. When a lunch account has a negative account balance, a la carte, snack
2 and/or double entree items will not be available regardless of paid, free or
3 reduced-price lunch status.
4
- 5 C. If a parent/guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided
6 between sibling accounts, the parent/ guardian must specify how the funds
7 are to be distributed to the students' accounts. Funds may not be transferred
8 between sibling accounts unless written permission is received from the
9 parent/guardian.

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11 **IV. NOTIFICATION OF LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCE**
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- 13 A. The District will make reasonable efforts to notify families and employees of a
14 low account balance when the account has a negative balance via the
15 District's automated alert notification system.
16
- 17 B. Parents/guardians will receive a negative balance notification when their
18 student's account has a negative balance, twice per week via the District's
19 automated alert notification system. These will be sent using the contact
20 information provided to the District by the legal guardian of the student.
21
- 22 C. Point of Sale Clarifications

23
24 Staff will not communicate account balances to students at the point of sale
25 where students receive reimbursable meals, unless the student asks for their
26 meal account balance information or asks if they can purchase a second
27 entree.
28

29 When students request to purchase a second entrée or a la carte item, staff
30 will inform the student of whether they have sufficient funds in their meal
31 account to purchase the second entrée or a la carte item. Any information
32 shared with students shall occur with concern for the dignity of the student.
33 Under no circumstances shall communication occur that shames the student
34 or that could attract the attention of other students during the communication.
35 Staff will use a voice that can be heard only by the individual student.
36 Students who do not have sufficient funds in their meal account to purchase
37 the second entrée or a la carte item may pay with cash in hand.
38

- 39 D. Students can check their meal account balance or deposit money at any point
40 of sale register at both the high school and middle school. Parents/guardians
41 are encouraged to sign up for an online account and password to monitor all
42 of their child's accounts. Parents/guardians should also have online access to
43 transaction details, balances and payments.
44
- 45 E. No students will be denied a meal; Under no circumstances shall any student
46 be turned away from a USDA meal of their choosing. Under no circumstances
47 shall any student receive restricted choice related to USDA meal options
48 provided to students. Once a student has placed a meal on a tray or
49 otherwise been served a meal, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn
50 from the student by the cashier or other school official, regardless of the
51 student's meal account balance.

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2 F. Nutrition services staff will work weekly with building leadership and/or the
3 school social worker to communicate information related to all accounts that
4 have a negative balance of \$25.00 or below. Families will receive increased
5 communication and follow-up coordinated through building-level
6 administration when the account has a negative balance of \$25.00 or below
7 until payment is received. Personal communication with families will occur
8 only through building-level administration, social worker or administrative
9 designee. Administrative coordination with outreach workers will occur for
10 communication with families who speak a language other than English.
11 Nutrition services staff will not communicate directly with families about
12 account balances.
13
14 G. When a meal account has a negative balance of \$50.00 or below, building-
15 level administration or social workers will contact parents/guardians to
16 discuss the situation and provide additional resources.
17
18 H. The District will not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees,
19 such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
20
21 I. The District will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota
22 Statutes section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal balances. The District
23 will not limit a student's participation in any school activities, graduation
24 ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, or other extracurricular
25 activities or access to materials, technology, or other items provided to
26 students due to an unpaid student meal account balance.
27
28 J. The District will not use a debt collections agency for the collection of student
29 meal account debt.
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31 **V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY**
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- 33 A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information will be provided in writing
34 (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packets, student handbook, etc.) to:
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36 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
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38 2. students and families who transfer into the District, at the time of
39 enrollment; and,
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41 3. all District personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
42
43 B. The District will post the policy on the District's website, in addition to
44 providing the required written notification described above.
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46 **Legal References:**

47 Minn. Stat. § 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)
48 Minn. Stat. § 124D.111 (School Meals Policies; Lunch Aid; Food Service Accounting)
49 42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
50 7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)

1 7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
2 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge
3 Policies (2016)
4 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on
5 Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
6 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A
7 Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169j (May 14, 2019) (*Letter to Ricker*)
8

9 **Cross References:**

10 Policy 708: Collection of Unpaid Obligations
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13 Dated: May 18, 2015

14 Revised: June 12, 2017; June 29, 2020; June 2, 2025