

**NORWICH FREE ACADEMY
FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM –CHARGING POLICY**

It is the collective position of Norwich Free Academy and Chartwells Dining Services that NFA students will have the necessary nutrition to remain focused during the school day.

Norwich Free Academy (NFA)'s Board of Education (the Board) has an agreement with the Connecticut State Department of Education to participate in one or more school Child Nutrition Programs and accepts full responsibility for adhering to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining to these school Child Nutrition Programs. The Board also accepts full responsibility for providing free or reduced-price meals to eligible students enrolled in NFA. Applicants for such meals are responsible for paying for meals until the application for the free or reduced-price meals is completed and approved. All applications for free and reduced-price lunch and any related information will be considered strictly confidential and not to be shared outside of NFA's food services program. Meals are planned to meet the specified nutrient standards outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture for children based on their age or grade group.

Because of NFA's participation in the Child Nutrition Programs, the Board approves the establishment of a system to allow a student to charge a meal. The charging of meals is intended for emergency situations only.

The Board realizes that funds from the non-profit school food service account, according to federal regulations, cannot be used to cover the cost of charged meals that have not been paid.

Moreover, federal funds are intended to subsidize the meals of children and may not be used to subsidize meals for adults (teachers, staff, and visitors). Adults are not allowed to charge meals at any time and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts.

Publicly identifying or shaming a student for any such unpaid charges, including, but not limited to delaying, or refusing to serve a meal to such student, designating a specific meal option for such student or otherwise taking any disciplinary action against such student is prohibited. A student will be allowed to charge one breakfast and one lunch per day.

NO ala carte items are allowed to be charged, regardless of lunch status.

The Board strongly encourages all families who may have a child eligible for free or reduced-price meals to apply.

School Staff/Food Service Director:

- Will be available to collect monies paid towards lunch accounts, and to assist families when questions or concerns arise.
- Throughout the year, if a student owes \$10 or more in meal charges, the account will be considered delinquent. Parents/guardians will receive a letter informing them of the amount owed. Bi-weekly emails will then occur for any balances over \$10. The outstanding balance may be paid in cash with a Chartwell's cashier during the daily lunch period or by using our on-line payment system, MySchoolBucks.

Access MySchoolBucks at MyNFA>Parents on the NFA website, www.nfaschool.org

Parents are encouraged to apply for Free and Reduced-price school meals by visiting www.nfaschool.org/chartwells-food-service

- Communications to the parent/guardian shall include an application for NFA's program for free or reduced-price meals, information regarding the supplemental nutrition assistance program administered by the Department of Social Services, and guidance for accessing 211 to locate any local food pantries and other community services that may be available to the family in their town of residence.
- If the unpaid charges due are equal to or more than the cost of thirty meals, such parent/guardian will be referred to NFA's Homeless Liaison. The Homeless Liaison will collaborate with the Head of School, social worker/guidance counselor and nurse as appropriate.

The Parent/Guardian:

- Will be responsible for making immediate payment or shall send in meals from home.

Payments may be made at school, in advance or at the point of purchase or online through the school's cafeteria hub at: <https://www.nfaschool.org/myafa-parents/chartwells-food-service>

- Is responsible for filling out and returning an Application for Free or Reduced-Priced School Meals in a prompt manner, **on a yearly basis**, or otherwise notifying NFA of their child's Direct Certification status.
- At the conclusion of the school year, delinquent food service accounts will be handled in the same manner as other unmet student financial obligations (e.g. missing/lost textbooks, uniforms, school issued equipment, etc.).
 - o NFA will notify the student and his/her parents/guardians in writing of the food service debt.
 - o Parents should make checks payable to Norwich Free Academy and have their child bring the check and the letter you received to the cafeteria.
 - o The cafeteria will validate the debt as paid by stamping the letter "Received".
 - o The student will bring the validated letter to the Director of Student Affairs, who will then clear the debt.

Delinquent Debt and Bad Debt

NFA's efforts to recover from households money owed due to the charging of meals will not have a negative impact on the children involved and shall focus primarily on the adults in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases.

Money owed because of unpaid meal charges shall be considered "delinquent debt," as defined, as long as it is considered collectable and reasonable efforts are being made to collect it. By June 30 of each year, the unpaid meal debt must be reimbursed by board of education funds and not the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA).

After reasonable attempts are made to collect the delinquent debt, and it is determined that further collection efforts are useless or too costly, the debt must be reclassified as "bad debt." Such debt shall be written off as an operating loss not to be absorbed by the nonprofit school food service account but must be restored using non-federal funds.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the school during the school year.

This policy shall be included in student/parent handbooks, on online portals that households use to access student accounts, placed on the school's website, and published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced-price meals.

This policy shall be provided to all school staff and/or school food authority staff responsible for its enforcement. In addition, school social workers, nurses, the homeless liaison, and other staff members assisting children in need or who may be contacted by families with unpaid meal charges also should be informed of this policy.

Norwich Free Academy's school food authority shall maintain, as required, documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy to households and school or school food authority-level staff responsible for policy enforcement.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this important matter, and for your continued support of Norwich Free Academy.

(cf. [3542](#) - Food Service)

(cf. [3542.31](#) - Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

[10-215](#) Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees. (as amended by PA 21-46)

[10-215a](#) Nonpublic school and nonprofit agency participation in feeding programs.

[10-215b](#) Duties of State Board of Education re feeding programs.

State Board of Education Regulations

State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education Operational Memorandum No. 4-17, "Guidance on Unpaid Meal Charges and Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments," Nov. 2, 2016

Operational Memorandum #19-10, State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education "Unallowable Charges to No-profit School Food Service Accounts and the Serving of Meals to No-paying Full and Reduced Price Students"

National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; Competitive Foods. (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220, Federal Register, Vol 45 No. 20, Tuesday, January 29, 1980, pp 6758-6772

USDA Guidance:

- SP 46-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies"
- SP 47-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payment"
- SP 57-2016 "Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q and A"
- SP 58-2016 "2016 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools"

Policy adopted: