

# Bowling Green City Schools Meals Charge Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines for the collection and payment of charged meals, the process for applying for free or reduced meals, and the management of unpaid meal charges in compliance with federal regulations. This policy applies to all students attending Bowling Green City Schools (K-12) and is designed to ensure that students have access to nutritious meals while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

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## Procedure for Collection and Payment of Charged Meals

1. **Responsibility of Guardian:** It is the guardian's responsibility to provide payment for lunch purchased at school for their children. Guardians are encouraged to prepay for meals through the school's online payment system, [payschoolscentral.com](http://payschoolscentral.com), or send payments to the school cafeteria.
2. **Charged Meals:** All students will be allowed to charge meals to their account when a student's meal account balance is insufficient.
3. **Communication of Charges:** The Food Service Department utilizes an automated system to notify guardians of their child's account balance should it become negative. The guardian will be notified via automated email and phone call to make a payment or provide an alternative solution.
4. **Payment Methods:** Payments can be made by cash or check to the school cafeteria, or with ACH or credit card through the district's payment portal, [payschoolscentral.com](http://payschoolscentral.com).

## Process for Applying for Free or Reduced Lunch

1. **Eligibility for Free or Reduced Meals:** Bowling Green City Schools offers free or reduced-price meals for students who meet the eligibility criteria established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Eligibility is based on family income, household size, and other factors as outlined in the annual application for free or reduced-price meals.
2. **Application Process:** Guardians must complete the Free and Reduced-Price Meal Application form annually to determine eligibility. Applications can be obtained online through the district website or by contacting the school's food services department. All information provided on the application is confidential and will only be used to determine eligibility.
3. **Approval Process:** Once an application is received, the district will review it for completeness and eligibility. If the application is approved, the student will receive free or reduced-price meals for the duration of the eligibility period. If the application is denied, the guardian will be notified, and they may appeal the decision if they believe there was an error in the determination.

4. **Notification of Eligibility:** Guardians will be notified of their child's eligibility status within 10 school days after the application is submitted. If there are any changes in income or household status, guardians should inform the school as soon as possible.

### **Unpaid Meals Charges Policy**

In accordance with USDA guidelines, the district has developed the following procedures for handling unpaid meal charges:

1. **Prevention of Unpaid Meal Charges:** Bowling Green City Schools will make every reasonable effort to prevent the accrual of unpaid meal charges. This includes regularly notifying guardians of their child's account balance, offering the option to prepay for meals, and providing information about applying for free or reduced-price meals.
2. **Unpaid Meal Charge Process:** If a student's meal account becomes negative, the student will still be provided a meal and the charge will be reflected on the student's account. Guardians will be notified that the student's account is in arrears and is in need of immediate attention.
3. **Collection of Unpaid Meal Charges:** If a charge remains unpaid, the district will make additional efforts to collect payment through phone calls, letters, and/or emails.

### **Leftover Funds**

1. **Refunds for Unenrolled Students:** If a student leaves Bowling Green City Schools (e.g., transfers to another school or graduates), any leftover funds in their meal account will be refunded to the guardian upon request. Requests for refunds should be submitted to the school's food service department within 30 days of the student's last day at school. Refunds will be issued by check from the Treasurer's Department. All unclaimed funds will be donated to assist families in need.
2. **Unused Meal Account Funds:** At the end of the school year, any remaining balance in a student's meal account will carry over to the following school year unless the student is unenrolled. Guardians will have the option to request a refund or transfer the balance to another sibling's account. Unused funds may also remain on the account for the next year's meals.
3. **Communication to Guardians of Graduating Seniors:** Prior to the end of the school year, the district will notify guardians of any remaining meal account balances. They will be given the option to either request a refund, transfer the funds to another student, or donate the remaining balance to families in need. Refund/Transfer requests must be submitted in 30 days to the district for record conciliation and reporting to the Board of Education.

4. **Check Threshold:** The Treasurer's Department will not issue checks for amounts less than \$5.00. The check threshold applies to any requests for payments, reimbursements, or distributions of funds that are under this threshold.

## **Bad Checks and Uncollectible Debts**

1. **Returned Checks:** If a check for payment of meals is returned due to insufficient funds or any other reason, the guardian will be notified immediately. The guardian will be required to reimburse the district for the face value of the check, plus any applicable bank fees. If the returned check is not paid in a timely manner, the district may pursue further collection actions.
2. **Uncollectible Debts:** In the case of uncollectible meal charges, the district will make every reasonable effort to recover the debt. If, after reasonable attempts, the debt is deemed uncollectible, it may be written off as bad debt according to USDA policy (see below).

## **USDA Policy on Writing Off Bad Debt**

In compliance with USDA guidelines, any unpaid meal charges that are determined to be uncollectible will be written off as bad debt. The district will follow the necessary steps to properly account for the debt and report it as required. Once a debt is written off, it will not be pursued for collection, and the school will not use federal funds to cover the amount of the bad debt.

The district will ensure that proper documentation is maintained for any uncollectible debts, and any written-off bad debt will be recorded in accordance with USDA requirements. This policy aims to maintain transparency and ensure fiscal responsibility while complying with federal regulations.

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Bowling Green City Schools is committed to providing nutritious meals to all students while maintaining fiscal responsibility. Guardians are encouraged to keep meal accounts current and to apply for free or reduced meals if eligible. This policy outlines the procedures for managing unpaid meal charges, ensuring that students have access to meals, and handling uncollectible debts in compliance with USDA guidelines. This policy ensures a balance between ensuring all students have access to nutritious meals while managing financial responsibility effectively for both the school district and families.

*USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.*