

## **Series 3000 - Business and Non-Instructional Operations**

### **5. Non- Instructional Operations**

#### **G. Auxiliary Agencies**

##### **(2) Food Service**

##### **(d) Operation**

##### **(iii) Charging Policy**

The goal of the food service program is to provide students with nutritious and healthy foods, through the District's food service program, that will enhance learning. The school nutrition program is an essential part of the education system and by providing good-tasting, nutritious meals in pleasant surroundings; we are helping to teach students the value of good nutrition.

The Board of Education (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 elementary and secondary students enrolled in the District's schools. Applicants for such meals are responsible to pay 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 the District'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.

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. 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).

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 and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts.

#### **Definitions**

**"Delinquent Debt"** is unpaid meal charges, like any other money owed to the nonprofit school food service account when payment is overdue, as defined by state or local policies.

**"Bad Debt"** is when unpaid meal charges are not collected and are considered a loss. Such debt must be written off as an operating loss, which cannot be absorbed by the nonprofit school food service account, but must be restored using nonfederal funds.

### **Unpaid Meal Charges**

The District strongly discourages meal charges, but understands that an occasional emergency makes it necessary. The student will be given the same reimbursable meal that other children are provided. All parents will be notified weekly of any unpaid meal charges.

The District uses an automated prepayment system, which allows parents/guardians to view their child's meal account balance and purchases, receive low-balance notifications, as well as make deposits to their child's school meal account. Any student whose account has insufficient funds (i.e., is at the charging limit) and does not bring a meal from home may charge one reimbursable meal per service. Students are only allowed to charge reimbursable meals but are excluded from charging a la carte items.

Any parent/guardian who anticipates a problem with paying for meals is encouraged to contact the Food Services Director and/or the applicable school principal for assistance. The Board encourages all families who may have a child eligible for free or reduced price lunch to apply. Communications with the parents or legal guardians for the purpose of collecting unpaid meal charges must include but are not limited to the following:

- contact information for local food pantries
- a free or reduced-price meal application including information regarding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), such as the Connecticut State Department of Education's Addendum C: Information on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- a link to the town's website listing any community services available to the residents of the Town
- If a student's unpaid meal charges equal or exceed the cost of 30 meals, the parent or guardian shall be referred to the district's designated local McKinney-Vento Act Homeless Education Liaison
- C.G.S. Section 10-215(c) allows for the acceptance of gifts, donations, or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of paying any unpaid charges for school lunches, breakfasts, or other meal services. Any such donations received will be recorded in the financial statements of the district.

### **Dissemination of Policy**

This policy shall be included in the student/parent handbooks, placed on the District website, on the website of each school and published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced price meals. Students transferring into the district mid-year will be provided a student/parent handbook and referred to the website for policy information.

This policy shall be provided to all school staff and/or school food authority staff responsible for its enforcement. A review of the charging policy will be included in the annual training provided to all staff prior to the start of the school year. 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.

District employees are prohibited from publicly identifying or shaming a child for any such unpaid meal charges, including, but not limited to, delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such child, designating a specific meal option for such child (such as offering a cheese sandwich as an “emergency meal”), or otherwise taking any disciplinary action against such child.

The District’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.

(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

                                  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. (7CFR 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”
- SP47-2016, “Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payment”
- SP 57-2016, “Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q & A”
- SP 58-2016, “2016 Edition Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation’s Schools”

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| Policy adopted: | June 7, 2011                   | SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS |
| Policy revised: | December 18, 2017              | Suffield, Connecticut   |
|                 | May 6, 2024 ; November 3, 2025 |                         |