BUSINESS AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS Regulation 3542.43(a)

Food Service Charging

Definitions

"**Delinquent Debt**" are unpaid meal charges, like any other money owed to the non-profit Food Service provider when payment is overdue, as defined by state or local policies.

"**Bad Debt**" are 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 non-profit Food Service provider but must be restored using non-federal funds.

Payment and Charging of School Meals

The Food Service provider uses www.mypaymentsplus.com, an online pre-payment service, which allows parents/guardians to view their child's meal account balances, purchases, receive low balance notifications and make deposits to their child's school meal account.

Adults are not allowed to charge any meals or a la carte items and must use the pre-payment plan or pay cash at the time of purchase.

Low or Negative School Lunch Account Balance

All children have the right to receive a reimbursable meal regardless of the ability to pay, however, the process set forth below shall be followed whenever a child does not have sufficient funds in their school meal account.

Step 1
The Bethany Public School District (District) will notify parents/guardians, on a monthly basis, when a child's school meal account has a negative balance, indicating that a payment is due. Communications with the parent/guardian regarding collection of a child's unpaid meal charges will include information on local food pantries, application for free or reduced-price meals and the Department of Social Services' supplemental nutrition assistance program and a link to the District's website that lists any community services available to town residents.

Step 2
Students will not be allowed to charge snacks or a la carte items when they have a negative balance. After thirty (30) meal charges, the parent/guardian will be referred to the District's Homeless Liaison.

Communications with the parent/guardian regarding collection of a child's unpaid meal charges will include information on local food pantries, application for free or reduced-price meals and the Department of Social Services' supplemental nutrition assistance program and a link to the District's website that lists any community services available to town residents.

The Bethany Board of Education (Board) will accept gifts, donations, or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of paying off any unpaid charges for school meals.

Delinquent Debt and Bad Debt

The District's efforts to recover from the household's money owed due to the charging of meals must 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, if it is considered collectible and reasonable efforts are being made to collect it. Such debt must be paid by June 30 of each school year.

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. Any unpaid meal debt remaining as of June 30 each year must be reimbursed using Board of Education funds and may not be charged to the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA).

Refund of School Meal Account Balances

When a student leaves the District, the Superintendent or designee must attempt to contact the student's household to return any funds remaining in the student's account that is equal to or exceeds the price of one (1) school meal. The District may encourage families that are not approved for free or reduced-price meals to donate the funds remaining in their account rather than receiving a refund when their child leaves the school. These funds may be used to cover unpaid meal charges that were uncollectable.

The parent/guardian of a student with a positive account balance who is no longer enrolled at Bethany Community School must send a written request to the Food Service Coordinator, 44 Peck Road, Bethany, CT, 06524 indicating the student name, parent/guardian name, address to mail refund and a contact phone number within sixty (60) days from the date the student leaves the District. After the sixty (60) day expiration, any remaining funds will be donated to the District and may be used to cover unpaid meal charges that were uncollectable.

Households approved for reduced price meal benefits must receive a refund regardless of the amount. There is a Federal requirement that children eligible for reduced-price meals pay a maximum of forty cents ($0.40) per lunch; retaining the unused funds would result in the per meal lunch price exceeding this amount.

Dissemination of Policy

The Board policy and this administrative regulation shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the District during the school year.

The Board policy and this administrative regulation shall be included in the student/parent handbook, on online portals that households use to access student accounts, placed on the District's website, and published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced-price meals and again to the household the first time the policy and administrative regulation is applied to a specific child.

The Board policy and this administrative regulation shall be provided to all school staff and the Food Service provider responsible for its enforcement.

The District shall maintain, as required, documentation of the methods used to communicate the Board policy and this administrative regulation to households, Food Service provider staff, and school staff responsible for its enforcement.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes § 10-215, as amended

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-215a

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-215b

State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education Operational Memorandum#4-17, "Guidance of Unpaid Meal Charges and Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments" (November 2, 2016)

State of Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, Operational Memorandum #19-10, "Unallowable Charges to Non-profit School Food Service Accounts and the Servicing of Meals to Non-paying Full and Reduced Price Students," (August 5, 2010)

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

United States Department of Agriculture, SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (July 8, 2016).

United States Department of Agriculture, SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payment (July 8, 2016).

United States Department of Agriculture, SP 57-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q and A (September 16, 2016).

United States Department of Agriculture, SP 58-2016, 2016 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies for Our Nation's Schools (September 19, 2016).

Regulation approved: October 6, 2016
Regulation revised: May 10, 2017
Regulation revised: July 1, 2017
Regulation revised: November 1, 2019
Regulation revised: October 1, 2021
Regulation Revised: June 9, 2026

Source: CABE & BPSD