STUDENTS
Series 5000
Policy #5016.1.1

MEAL CHARGING POLICY

The EASTCONN Board of Directors (the "Board") recognizes the importance of providing nutritious food to students in the EASTCONN Schools (the "District"). The goal of the food service program is to provide students with nutritious and healthy foods through the District's food services 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.

EASTCONN and its Board have 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. EASTCONN and the Board also accept full responsibility for providing free or reduced-price meals to eligible students enrolled in the District's schools and Districts under Interschool Agreements.

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 priced lunch and any related information will be considered strictly confidential and not to be shared outside of the District's food services program without prior permission through Disclosure Release Request for Free or Reduced Eligibility Status of Student in the School Nutrition Programs.

Charging Meals

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 the District's participation in the Child Nutrition Programs, the Board approves the establishment of a system to allow a student to charge a meal. 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 (have a negative balance) and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts or cash.

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EASTCONN Food Services, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality meal experience, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students are welcome. Eastconn Food Services **prohibits** the public identification or shaming of a child/student for any unpaid charges, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Delaying or refusing to serve a meal to such student,
- Designating a specific meal option for such student
- Otherwise taking any disciplinary action against such student.

Collection of Unpaid Meal Charges

A student needing to charge a meal will be informed of his/her right to purchase a meal, which may exclude a la carte items, for any school breakfast, lunch or other feeding. In order to sustain the District's food services program, the District cannot permit the excessive charging of student meals. Therefore, any charging of meals must be consistent with this policy and any accompanying regulations. EASTCONN shall develop regulations designed to effectively and respectfully address family responsibility for unpaid meals. Any parent/guardian who anticipates a problem with paying for meals is encouraged to contact EASTCONN's Food Services Director and/or the applicable school Principal for assistance. EASTCONN encourages all families who may have a child eligible for free or reduced-price lunch to submit an application. Students shall be allowed to charge up to thirty (30) meals. The student will be given the same reimbursable meal that other children are provided.

Parents/Guardians of students who charge shall be notified by phone, mail, and/or email, after their child has charged the cost of 5 meals. If a pattern of charging continues, attempts will be made to discuss the issue with the parents/guardians and encourage them to complete a free and reduced meal application. Communications with parents/guardians regarding collection of a child's unpaid meal charges shall include information on local food pantries, applications for free or reduced-price meals and the Connecticut Department of Social Services' supplemental nutrition assistance program, and a link to the District's website that lists any community services available to town/city residents. When a child's unpaid meal charges equal or exceed the cost of thirty (30) meals, such child's parent/guardian shall be referred to the District's homeless education liaison. For households that cannot afford to pay their school meal charges, the district will work with them to establish a payment plan. EASTCONN will accept gifts of cash, donations, or grants from any public or private sources for the purpose of paying off any unpaid meal charges of students. EASTCONN, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.

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By June 30 of each year, the unpaid meal debt must be reimbursed by the serviced District's board of education funds and not the NSFSA. Each district under an Interschool Agreement with EASTCONN will be invoiced the remaining delinquent debt for the end of the school year. The invoiced district is responsible for payment in full of the delinquent debt balance. Payment must be received no later than June 30th of the invoiced school year.

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"

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