

{{Full_Charter_Heading}}

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

8245

[NOTE: THE FOLLOWING POLICIES PROVIDING NUTRITION AND MEAL REQUIREMENTS, ETC. ARE REQUIRED ONLY IF YOUR CHARTER SCHOOL RECEIVES FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER EITHER *THE CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1966* (42 USC § 1771), and/or *THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH ACT* (42 USC § 1751).]

Unpaid School Meal Charges

The {{School_Name}} adopts the following policy to ensure Charter School employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, avoid identifying to other students or bystanders students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

Unpaid Meal Charges

When a student's school meal account funds are exhausted, a student paying the full or reduced price for meals may charge no more than _____ meals or \$ _____ to his or her school meal account. Students may charge breakfasts and/or lunches and/or afternoon snacks up to the maximum amount. Charging of *a la carte* or extra items to a student's account will not be permitted.

Students who have charged the maximum amount allowed will not [OPTIONAL: will] be allowed to charge further meals until the negative account balance has been paid in full. However, such students will be allowed to purchase a meal if the student pays for the meal when it is received.

[SELECT ONE]

[OPTION 1: Students who have charged the maximum amount and cannot pay out of pocket for a meal will not be provided an alternate meal.]

[OR]

[OPTION 2: Students who have charged the maximum amount and cannot pay out of pocket for a meal will be provided an alternate meal which meets the federal requirements for reimbursement. Alternate meals shall be provided for **breakfasts and/or lunches and/or afternoon snacks**. This meal shall be provided at [SELECT ONE: **no cost OR a cost of \$ _____, which shall be charged to the student's account**]. Such alternate meals shall be provided no more than _____ times per school year.]

[OPTIONAL: The Charter School shall place the cashier station before the serving area to avoid requiring a student to return a meal if they are found to have reached the maximum charge amount.]

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases.

[SELECT ONE]

[OPTION 1: The Charter School will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances reach _____ dollars, prior to going into a negative balance. If an account does have a negative balance, additional communications will be advanced to the family in order to seek payment for the negative fund balance and to re-establish a positive account balance for the student's use. At least one written warning shall be provided to a student and his or her parent or guardian prior to denying meals for exceeding the Charter School's charge limit. Families will be notified by **[automated calling system and/or a letter sent home with the student and/or by mail and/or by email].**]

OR

[OPTION 2: The Board directs the Executive Director to draft a procedure detailing the manner in which notice of low account balances shall be given. The Charter School will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. The School will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges. At least one written warning shall be provided to a student and his or her parent/guardian prior to denying meals for exceeding the Charter School's charge limit. Families will be notified by **[automated calling system and/or a letter sent home with the student and/or by mail and/or by email].**]

This notice may include a copy or description of this policy and information regarding how to apply for free or reduced price meals, including contact information for the [federal programs director], who can help them with the application process. Active efforts to encourage eligible households to apply for free or reduced lunch may be used to prevent meal charges.

If payment of the negative balance is not received within _____ days of the maximum charge limit being attained, the debt will be turned over to the Executive Director or the Executive Director's designee for collection. If the debt is not paid within _____ days of mailing the final notice of the negative account balance, it shall be considered bad debt for the purposes of federal law concerning unpaid meal charges. Such bad debt must be restored using non-federal funds, from sources such as the School's general fund, special funding from state or local governments, or other sources.

Efforts to collect payment may include use of collection agencies, small claims court, or any other method permitted by law, provided the benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs incurred to achieve those collections.

Students and parents/guardians of students are encouraged to prepay meal costs. Payments for school meals may be made by **[SELECT ANY OPTIONS THAT APPLY. IF ANY METHOD OF PAYMENT, SUCH AS PAYING ONLINE, INCURS AN ADDITIONAL FEE, INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF THIS FEE. AT LEAST ONE METHOD OF PAYMENT MUST BE FREE OF CHARGE]**:

1. Bringing payment to the school or Charter School office;
2. Making payment on the Charter School website; or
3. **[OTHER METHODS OF PAYMENT]**

Notification

The Charter School will provide a copy of this policy to all households at the start of school each year and to families and students that transfer into the Charter School at the time of transfer. All Charter School staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy shall also receive a copy of this policy. It may also be communicated to school social workers, school nurses, the homeless liaison, or other staff members who may assist students in need. The Charter School may also make this policy available in student handbooks, on the Charter School website, or by other means deemed appropriate.

Records

Records of how and when this policy is communicated to households and staff will be retained.

The Charter School shall also retain documentation of the handling of bad debt, including:

1. Evidence of efforts to collect unpaid meal charges in accordance with the this policy;
2. Evidence the collection efforts fell within the timeframe and methods established by this policy;
3. Financial documentation showing when the unpaid meal charge(s) became an operating loss; and
4. Evidence any funds written off as bad debt were restored to the nonprofit school food service account using non-Federal sources.

[OPTIONAL: Charitable Assistance

The Charter School may establish an unpaid meal charges fund to cover the cost of unpaid meal charges. Charitable groups, individuals, school fundraisers, and others may donate to this fund. Parents/guardians of children who pay the full amount for school meals and who have funds left over in their school meals account at the end of the school year may be offered the option of donating these funds to the unpaid meal charges fund.

If the School chooses to establish an unpaid meal charges fund, the Executive Director or his or her designee shall establish procedures for the use of such funds.]

Cross References: 4175 Required Annual Notices

Other References: 2017 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools, United States Department of Agriculture
Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance Q&As, March 23, 2017, United States Department of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture, Memorandum to State and Regional Nutrition Program Directors) July 8, 2016

Policy History:

Adopted on:

Revised on:

Reviewed on: