

Administrative Procedure
FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT - (Meal Charges)**Descriptor Code: EF-AP(1)**

Unless meals are provided at no charge, the district expects students and employees to pay for meals prior to or at the time of receipt. The ability to charge meals is a privilege, not a right, and is subject to the limitations established in this procedure.

Notice

At the beginning of each school year, a copy of this procedure will be provided to every parent/guardian in the district as required by law. In addition, a copy of this procedure, along with information about free and reduced-price school meals, will be provided to the parents/guardians of all students who enroll after the beginning of the school year.

A copy of this procedure will also be provided to all building administrators, staff responsible for collecting payment for meals at the point of service, staff involved with notifying parents/guardians about account balances, school social workers, nurses, counselors, the district liaison for homeless children and youths, and any other staff who regularly assist students in need.

Students

1. A student may not accumulate more than ten unpaid meal charges.
2. Students may not charge à la carte items.
3. A student with money in hand will not be denied a meal even if the student has past due charges.
4. Students will not be identified, singled out, shamed or punished by the district for the failure of their parents/guardians to pay for or provide meals, and the district will not withhold student records in violation of law.

Interventions

After a student accumulates ten unpaid meal charges, the district will encourage the parents/guardians to submit an application for free and reduced-price meals if an application has not been recently submitted, and the student will be referred to a counselor for intervention. The counselor may:

1. Meet with the student to assess to the extent possible whether the student or the student's family is experiencing hardships, barriers or other circumstances with which the counselor could assist.

2. Make repeated attempts to contact the parents/guardians to notify them of the lunch charges, discuss the situation and any other concerns the counselor may have after meeting with the student, and resolve the situation.
3. Encourage the parents/guardians to submit the free and reduced-price meals application and inquire about any assistance that might be needed to complete the application.
4. Provide other resources as applicable.

District employees are mandated by the state of Missouri to report any instances of suspected abuse or neglect to the Children's Division (CD) of the Department of Social Services. District personnel will report to the CD any instance where a student's arrival at school with no provision for food leads to a reasonable cause to suspect neglect.

Working with Parents/Guardians

To ensure that parents/guardians have ample opportunity to resolve situations involving unpaid meal charges, the district will:

1. Provide timely notification to parents/guardians when account balances run low (when applicable).
2. Invoice parents/guardians for unpaid meal charges utilizing the district's student information system (SIS).
3. Work with parents/guardians to create a payment plan that allows for the elimination of accumulated balances over time.

Debt Collection

Delinquent Debt

Unpaid meal charges will be considered a delinquent debt 30 days after notice that charges are due when no payment or payment plan agreement has been made. Unpaid charges will be considered delinquent as long as the district determines the debt is collectible and efforts to collect the debt are ongoing. The district will make reasonable efforts to collect delinquent debt.

Records

The district will maintain detailed records pertaining to delinquent and bad debt, including:

1. Evidence of efforts to collect unpaid meal charges.

2. Evidence that collection efforts fell within the time frame and methods established by this procedure.
3. Financial records showing when delinquent debt became bad debt.
4. Evidence that funds written off as bad debt were restored to the NSFSA from nonfederal sources.

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Note: The reader is encouraged to review policies and/or forms for related information in this administrative area.

Lawson R-XIV

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