

Centerville School Unpaid Meal Charge Policy

I. Federal Requirement

The purpose of this policy is to address the need for the school food authority (SFA) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to institute and clearly communicate a meal charge policy, which includes the availability of alternate meals. Because all students in participating schools may receive reimbursable school meals, all SFAs must have a policy in place for children who are participating at the reduced price or paid rate, but either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. Such a policy ensures that school food service professionals, school administrators, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectation in these situations.

II. Purpose of Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the food service department. The goals of this standard of practice are:

- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts
- To support positive situations with district staff, district business policies, student and parent/guardian to the maximum extent possible
- To establish policies that are age appropriate
- To encourage parent/guardian to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility to the student
- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges

III. Scope of Responsibility:

- The Lunch Clerk, Principals, and Business Manager: Responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying the student's parents/guardian
- The Parent/Guardian: Immediate payment

IV. Administration

1. All families are encouraged to apply for free and reduced price meal benefit. Any family that falls into a negative balance will receive a written notification to encourage them to apply for free or reduced price meal benefits.
2. Families are encouraged to pre-pay for meals and money is accepted in the school office daily for payments on the day of service. Written notification of prepayment options occurs at the beginning of each school year, is given to each new transfer student, is posted on the school website, and is included in the student handbook.

3. Families will be notified of the school Unpaid Meal Charge Policy in writing before the school year begins and with each new transfer student. This policy will also be posted on the school website.
4. SFAs may limit the amount of funds that a student can use daily for a la carte purchases.
5. **K-12 Students:** Statements will be emailed each day for accounts with a balance of \$5 or less. Printed statements will be mailed to families. Online account balance information is available.
 - a. Calls on delinquent accounts are made weekly to try to collect payment.
 - b. No charges are allowed for extras or a la carte on any negative accounts or accounts with a zero balance.
 - c. All delinquent accounts at the end of the school year will be subject to collections for payment.
 - d. If a child has money to purchase a reduced price or paid meal at the time of meal service, the child must be provided a meal. SFAs may not use the child's money to repay previously unpaid charges if the child intended to use the money to purchase that day's meal.
6. Alternate meals.
 - a. Any delinquent account without payment is encouraged to send money each day for student meals or it is up to parent/guardian to provide a sack lunch from home. Alternate meals will be served to students with delinquent accounts at the discretion of the administration.
 - b. If an alternate meal is served that meets meal pattern requirement, those meals can be claimed for reimbursement. If an alternate meal is served that does not meet the meal pattern requirements, those meals may not be claimed for reimbursement and the food used for alternate meals must come from funds outside the non-profit school food service account.
7. Reasonable efforts will be used to collect delinquent lunch accounts. Unpaid meal charges may be carried over at the end of the school year as delinquent debt and collection efforts may continue into the new school year. This allows SFAs to work with individual families to establish longer repayment plans and to continue pursuing collection efforts when children move to a new school outside the district. When local officials determine further collection efforts for delinquent debt are useless or too costly, the debt must be reclassified as "bad debt."