FREE OR REDUCED COST MEALS ELIGIBILITY AND MEAL CHARGES

The district shall comply with all state and federal laws applying to providing free and reduced meals under the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and other related federal grant programs.

Free or Reduced Meals Eligibility

Families of students enrolled in the district who wish to qualify for free or reduced price meals may submit an application on or after July 1 for the current school year. If the financial situation of a household changes during the school year, they may submit a new application to become eligible. Applications are available at the Central Administrative Office of the school building.

Meal Charges

The written meal charge policy and guidelines shall be in place before the beginning of each school year and parents shall be advised of the available payment systems and meal prices. The district will encourage pre-payment of meal balances but the district must include a method for adding funds during the school day such as cash payments at the school office. A qualifying student with money to purchase a reduced price meal must be provided the meal; the district may not use that money for previously unpaid charges if the students intended to buy a meal that day.

All balances remaining in accounts shall carry over to the next month. Balances of households qualifying for free or reduced meals with funds remaining in the account at the end of the school year shall be offered a refund. The district shall attempt to contact the household of all students transferring out or graduating from the district to return any unused funds remaining in the student's account. The district may set varying meal charge guidelines for students of different grade levels including charges relating to alternate meals, ala carte items and limits on charges that a parent may set for a student's daily lunch expenditures.

The district must set written guidelines regarding the collection of delinquent meal charges such as the amount of delinquent meal charges which initiate an established collection process, providing notice to households of those students and carrying out appropriate follow-up. Unpaid meal charges are classified as "delinquent debt: and remain on the food service accounting documents until they are collected or written off as uncollectible.

Guidelines must also cover how the district will handle situations where children eligible for reduced price meals do not have money in their accounts to cover the cost of their meal at the time of service. Households must be notified of all payment methods used by the district, including any fees. At least one payment method must be free of charge. The district cannot solely require the use of an online payment system; another option must be available.

Approved 06/11/2012 Reviewed 10/09/2017 Revised 08/14/2017

Confidentiality

The information provided by families on the free and reduced price application will be used only for determining eligibility for meal or milk benefits and verification of eligibility. Only staff members and organizations carrying out the activities of the School Lunch Act shall have access to this information.

The district should use methods of lunch payment systems such as pre-payment to avoid openly identifying children who qualify for free or reduced meals. Meal cards, tickets, tokens or other methods of payment must not be coded or colored to identify such status.

Policy Communication

This policy will be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households that transfer to the district during the school year.

This policy will also be provided annually to all district staff responsible for enforcing the policy including food service professionals. Staff members such as counselors, school nurses, homeless liaisons, and others assisting students in need should also be informed of the policy.

The district will maintain documentation of the annual distribution of this policy.

It shall be the responsibility of the superintendent to implement this policy.

Legal Reference: 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 et seq.
7 C.F.R. §§ 210 et seq.
USDA Unpaid Meal Charges, SP 46-2016, 47-2016 and 57-2016.

Cross Reference: 504.19 Student Fees