

Series 3000 - Business and Non-Instructional Operations

5. Non- Instructional Operations

G. Auxiliary Agencies

(2) Food Service

(d) Operation

(iii)Charging Policy

The goal of the food service program is to provide students with nutritious and healthy foods, through the District's food service 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.

The Board of Education (Board) has 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. The Board also accepts full responsibility for providing free or reduced price meals to eligible elementary and secondary students enrolled in the District's schools. 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 price lunch and any related information will be considered strictly confidential and not to be shared outside of the District's food services program. 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.

Although not required by law, because of the District's participation in the Child Nutrition Programs, the Board approved 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 and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts.

Definitions

"Alternate Meals" are not clearly defined in federal and state regulations. The use of alternate meals refers to any meal served to a student that is different from the day's advertised reimbursable meal. Alternate meals are most often provided to those students who have forgotten their meal payment(s) or medium of exchange.

“Delinquent Debt” is unpaid meal charges, like any other money owed to the nonprofit school food service account when payment is overdue, as defined by state or local policies.

“Bad Debt” is when unpaid meal charges are not collected and are considered a loss. Such debt must be written off as an operating loss, which cannot be absorbed by the nonprofit school food service account, but must be restored using nonfederal funds.

All Students

The District strongly discourages meal charges, but understands that an occasional emergency makes it necessary. Students shall be allowed to charge up to 3 meals. The student will be given the same reimbursable meal that other children are provided. After charging 3 meals, the student shall receive written notification that the child will then be given an alternate meal consisting of one of the alternate meals shown in (c) below. 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, if appropriate.

The District/school policy is as follows:

- a. all charges must be paid in 10 days
- b. students may not charge more than 3 reimbursable meals
- c. after the third meal, the school will provide an alternate meal consisting of one of the choices listed below:

Bagel with American cheese, milk and fruit OR

American cheese sandwich with milk and fruit

- d. parents will be notified and asked for prompt payment after 3 charged meals

The District uses an automated prepayment system, which allows parents/guardians to view their child’s meal account balance and purchases, receive low-balance notifications, as well as make deposits to their child’s school meal account. Any student whose account has insufficient funds (i.e., is at the charging limit) and does not bring a meal from home may charge up to 3 reimbursable meals or any combination of meals up to the cost of 3 reimbursable meals. When the charge limit is reached, an alternate meal will be provided as stated above. This meal will not be charged to the student’s meal account.

In order to sustain the District’s food services program, the District cannot permit the excessive charging of student meals. Therefore, the charging of meals must be consistent with this policy.

Any parent/guardian who anticipates a problem with paying for meals is encouraged to contact the Food Services Director and/or the applicable school principal for assistance. The Board encourages all families who may have a child eligible for free or reduced price lunch to apply.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy shall be included in the student/parent handbooks, placed on the District website, on the website of each school and published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced price meals.

This policy shall be provided to all school staff and/or school food authority staff responsible for its enforcement. In addition, school social workers, nurses, the homeless liaison, and other staff members assisting children in need or who may be contacted by families with unpaid meal charges also should be informed of this policy.

The District's school food authority shall maintain, as required, documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy to households and school or school food authority-level staff responsible for policy enforcement.

(cf. 3542 – Food Service)

(cf. 3542.31) – Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program

Legal reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-215 Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees

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. (7CFR 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"
- SP47-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payment"
- SP 57-2016, "Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q & A"
- SP 58-2016, "2016 Edition Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools"

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SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Suffield, Connecticut