

Board of Education

MEAL CHARGES

The District encourages families to prepay for meals to ensure that students have consistent access to healthy, reimbursable meals without accruing unpaid meal charges. The Board of Education recognizes that on occasion, students may forget to bring meal money to school or may not have sufficient funds on their account to purchase a meal. The Miller Place UFSD provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. To ensure that students do not go hungry, the Board of Education allows students who may forget meal money to “charge” the cost of the meal to be paid back at a later date as outlined below.

Unpaid charges place a financial strain on food service programs. The District operates a self-sustaining food service program that does not receive general fund support for routine operations, and thus must generate funds through student and adult sales, ala carte sales and Federal/State reimbursement. Unpaid meal charges reduce program revenue which affects the program’s ability to pay program expenses. Uncollected charges may result in higher meal prices for all students.

The Food Service Program complies with state and federal guidelines by maintaining a system for accounting for full and reduced-price meal charges as follows:

1. The District allows only regular reimbursable meals to be charged to the student’s food service account. No à la carte items, snacks, beverages, or second entrees are allowed to be “charged” to the student’s food service account.
2. The District does not limit the number of meal charges.
3. The point of sale system will be utilized to record all regular meals charged as well as all payments collected. Charged meals must be counted and claimed for reimbursement on the day that the student received the meal. Charges paid back will be recorded as “charges paid”.
4. The parent or guardian shall be notified in writing that the student’s student account balance is exhausted and unpaid meal charges are due. The notification may include a repayment schedule but shall not charge any interest or fees in connection with meals charged.
5. Students shall not be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from other cafeteria purchases, unless a parent or guardian has provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. No student with unpaid charges will be prohibited from purchasing a reimbursable meal if they have money that day. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (e.g., à la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.
6. Parent/Guardian(s) will receive e-mail reminders regarding the unpaid balance until the unpaid balance is paid in full or the balance is considered uncollectable. If a sibling has money on account, this balance may be transferred to another sibling with an unpaid balance. The Food Service Department will notify the parent/guardian.
7. Written notification of unpaid meal charges over \$5.00 will be mailed home on a monthly basis to the parent/guardian. Additionally parents are sent a weekly balance update for their reference.
8. Students and parents are required to pay their outstanding food service charges before the end of the school year. All building principals, school counselors and related staff may be notified of the outstanding charges and assist families and food service as needed. If the District suspects that a student may be abusing meal charging privileges, the District may contact the student’s parent regarding the student’s meal charging. Written notice will subsequently be sent to the parent/guardian if the student continues to abuse this policy, that the privilege of charging meals will be rescinded.

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9. The Food Service Coordinator is authorized to work with struggling families to establish payment plans to pay back negative balances.
10. If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, Administration will investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents and families will be encouraged to apply for free or reduced-price lunches for their child, if applicable.
11. Meal charge information will be communicated to all households at the start of school each year and to new households transferring to the school during the school year. This policy shall be provided to all school staff responsible for enforcement of the meal charge policy.
12. The District does not and will never enter into the practice of “lunch shaming” which requires students to work off lunch balances or be served alternate meals. Students who cannot pay for a meal or who have unpaid meal debt shall not be publicly identified or stigmatized (including wristbands or hand stamps), required to do chores or work to pay for meals, or have meals thrown away after they have been served. District staff shall not discuss a student’s unpaid meal debt in front of other students. The district shall not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid school meal fees. However, the district may discretely notify students of their account balances, and why certain items (e.g., à la carte, etc.) could not be provided with charged meals.

Prepayment of Meals

The District offers families the ability to prepay meals, snacks, and beverages with credit card, check, or cash. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Families may register for a convenient on-line school meal account to see their child’s activity, set automatic reminders when prepaid account balances are getting low or if a student has charged meal and has a “charge” balance owed. This online account eliminates the need to rush checks or cash into the school food service program. The current online account program does not charge a fee to view your child’s activity or to set alerts but does charge a small fee for online credit card payments.

Free and Reduced-Price Meals:

Families may apply for free or reduced-price meals at any time during the school year. Free and Reduced-Price Meal Applications and student eligibility information is mailed to all families prior to the start of the school year. The applications are also available at the District Office, all school buildings, and the District website. For more information, please contact the Food Service Coordinator at the District Office for assistance. Additionally, a free and reduced-price meal application shall be included with every school enrollment packet.

Prepaid Student Account Balances:

All positive prepaid student account balances remaining at the end of the school year will automatically be carried into the next school year for students. When students leave the district or graduate, the district will attempt to contact the parent/guardian to return remaining funds. Parents/guardians may request that funds be transferred to a sibling’s account. Families may also choose to donate balances to cover unpaid meal charges for needy families (any prepaid balances related to a free or reduced student are excluded). Unclaimed funds remaining after 3 months will become the property of the Miller Place Food Service Program.

Staff Purchases

Staff members are allowed to purchase food from the food service program. All staff purchases must be on a cash basis. Staff members are not allowed to charge meals to be repaid later.

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Reference: Policy 5140 – Student Wellness
Policy 5140.R – Student Wellness – Regulation
Policy 5140.1.R – Student Wellness – Administrative Guidelines
Policy 8500 – School Lunch and Breakfast Program
42 USC §1779 (Child Nutrition Act of 1966)
42 USC §§1758(f)(1); 1766(a) (National School Lunch Act)
2 CFR §200.426 (accounting for debt in federal programs)
7 CFR §§210.9 210.12; 210.19; 220.13; 245.5 (accounting in federal school meal programs)
Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (Public Law 111-296), §143
USDA Report to Congress, *Review of Local Policies on Meal Charges and Provision of Alternate Meals*, June 2016
USDA Memo SP 23-2017-Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A
USDA Memo SP 57-2016-Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A USDA Memo SP 46-2016-Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies
USDA Memo SP 47-2016-Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments
Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge - Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools, USDA FNS Guidance Document (May 2017)
NYSED Child Nutrition-Student Meal Charge Policy May 30, 2017
Education Law §908

Adopted: 06/14/2017
Reviewed: 05/30/2018 12/11/2019
Revised: 06/13/2018 01/29/2020