



Book	Policy Manual
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## **Policy**

Policy for Students with Insufficient Funds for School Meals and Delinquent Accounts in the School Nutrition Program (aka Meal Charge Policy OR Unpaid Meal Charge Policy).

## **Regulations**

2 CFR Part 200 Section 143 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Act 55 of 2017 amendment to Section 1337 of Pennsylvania School Code.

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are integral in ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals to support their academic success. It is also imperative to protect the financial stability of the school nutrition program.

The intent of this policy is to establish a process and procedure to handle situations when children eligible for reduced-price or full-price meal benefits have insufficient funds to pay for meals at the time of service and communicate the policy to all students and households.

### 1. Policy

1a. Students who qualify for free meals will not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance on their cafeteria account. Only in cases where a parent/guardian has directed the school, in writing, to withhold meals from a student can a meal be withheld.

1b. Parents/Guardians and students are encouraged to deposit money in their child's cafeteria account so that adequate money is readily available to purchase school breakfast and lunch. Parents/Guardians can deposit money by sending a check or cash with their child to school. Parents/Guardians may also deposit online by using [www.schoolcafe.com](http://www.schoolcafe.com). A convenience fee may apply for using this service which is imposed by the online service, not the school district.

1c. Students without funds to pay for a reduced-price or full-price meal will be permitted to charge Breakfast and Lunch meals.

1d. Students are allowed to charge five (5) meals before their account is considered delinquent and attempts to notify the parent/guardian are initiated.

1e. Students who charge a meal will receive a reimbursable meal that is offered to all other students that day.

1f. A student who requests a school meal must be provided with one regardless of whether the student has money.

1g. When a student owes money for five (5) or more TOTAL school meals, the school must make at least two (2) attempts to reach the student's parent/guardian and request the parent/guardian apply for participation in the school meal program.

1h. Communications regarding money owed by a student for school meals must be made to the student's parent/guardian and not to the student. For students enrolled in grade 9 through 12, the Board of School Directors may require the schools to direct communications regarding a low balance or money owed to the student if the communications are made individually to the student by appropriate school personnel and are made discreetly. This is in addition to the communication to the parent/guardian.

1i. A student who cannot pay for a school meal or who owes money for school meals may not be publicly identified or stigmatized.

1j. A student who cannot pay for a school meal may not be required to perform chores or other work to pay for the school meal. A student may be discreetly provided his/her account balance if s/he asks the cashier.

1k. A student may not be required to discard a school meal after it was served to the student due to the student's inability to pay for the meal or the amount of money owed by the student for prior school meals.

1l. No students, under any circumstances, are permitted to accrue charges from sales on non-reimbursable meals or snacks.

1m. Students will not be permitted to charge a-la-carte items when their account has a negative balance.

## 2. Communicating the Policy

The policy must be communicated to all students and households at the beginning of the school year. SFA's must document methods of communicating the policy to households and training of staff responsible for policy enforcement.

2a. The written meal charge policy will be communicated to the household by posting on the Northern Potter School District Food Service website, and will be included in informational forms distributed on the first day of school and to all incoming transfer students during the school year.

2b. Child Nutrition Program staff will receive training on meal charge policy and record of training will be maintained as part of the professional development portfolio.

2c. Documentation of the communication and training plan will be maintained for the Federal Program Administrative Review.

## 3. Notifying the Household of Negative Balance in Student Cafeteria Account

Schools must provide a meal to a student who requests one, regardless of whether the student has money to pay for the meal or owes money for school meals. When a student owes money for five (5) or more school meals, the Food Service Director, or designee, must make at least two (2) attempts to reach the parents/guardians to have them apply for participation in the free/reduced lunch

program and may offer assistance in helping them apply. Schools may not publicly identify or stigmatize a student who cannot pay or who owes money for school meals.

3a. The student's household will be notified on a weekly basis when a student's cafeteria account falls below five dollars (\$5). Notices of five dollars (\$5) or less and negative balances will be sent to the parent/guardian weekly by the food service department. Paper notifications will be sent home with the student, addressed to the parent/guardian of: \_\_\_\_\_, when no email is on file. If negative balances reach twenty-five dollars (\$25) or greater, a letter will be sent by the Food Service Director indicating that monies are due or payment arrangements need to be made within ten (10) business days.

Families are encouraged to establish repayment plans.

Upon withdrawing from the district, students must bring their account to zero (0) balance; any refund will be sent to the parent/guardian.

3b. Notifications to households will include the amount of unpaid meal charges, expected payment dates, the consequences on non-payment and where to go for questions or assistance.

3c. The consequences of non-payment will be determined on a case-by-case basis but may include filing claim with a collection agency or the local magistrate, depending on the amount of the negative balance.

3d. The persons responsible for managing unpaid meal charges are:

a. SNP school-based staff will collect payment for meals at the school office and deposit money daily.

b. SNP office staff or designee will contact households.

#### 4. Delinquent Debt

Delinquent debt can carry over to the immediate subsequent school year if the delinquent debt is being actively pursued using the collection procedures identified in the school's Local Meal Charge Policy. Once the school has utilized the collection measures in their Local Meal Charge Policy, and the debt remains uncollected, it is considered bad debt. Bad debt is an unallowable charge to the food service account. Therefore, a transfer into the food service account to cover the amount incurred by bad debt must occur. This should occur no later than the end of each school year. **Bad debt** is defined as delinquent debt that is deemed uncollectible. Funds resulting from bad debt cannot be recovered using SNP funds and must be offset by non-federal sources.

4a. Efforts to collect delinquent and/or bad debt will be handled by:

a. Sending letters and email notices.

b. Making phone calls to households.

c. Supplying a Notice of Adverse Action/Potential Collection Routes.

d. Communicating consequences to household which may include referral to small claims court, local judicial system, or a collection agency.

4b. The district may accept gifts to the food service account that are in compliance with federal regulations, 2 CFR Part 200. If the gift or donation is not in conflict of 2 CFR Part 200, the school may accept gifts or donations for the direct benefit of students. The revenue must have a separate account of funding number so it is not commingled with food service account revenue funds from federal and state reimbursements or daily sales. The donation of gifted funds may be transferred to the food service account or fund, at the appropriate time, to offset

delinquent student meal accounts. The transaction will be transparent as a debit and credit in the General Ledger. Funds will be used for delinquent free or reduced-status student accounts.

#### 5. Collection Procedures for Delinquent and Bad Debt - Adverse Action

The Food Service Department will use various means for recovering bad debt, i.e., utilizing a collection process, local judicial system, etc.

5a. Students with negative account balances of greater than fifty dollars (\$50) will have a letter sent to their parent/guardian from the Food Service Director indicating that if payment is not made within fourteen (14) days, the account may be turned over to the district magistrate's office or a collection agency. Any further costs incurred due to lack of compliance will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

5b. Positive balances in accounts of graduating seniors will be moved to sibling's account. Any senior who does not have a sibling still in school will receive a refund. Any students withdrawing with a positive balance will be offered a form to request a refund, or give permission to donate to the cafeteria to post to delinquent accounts. Positive student balances will be absorbed by the food services department for any student who leaves/withdrawals that does not complete a refund form.