

534 UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

[Note: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016 requires all School Food Authorities (i.e., education districts) operating federal school meal programs to have a written and clearly communicated system to address unpaid meal charges by July 1, 2017. USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017 clarified that education districts could adopt a “policy” or “standard practice.” Although this document is styled as a “policy,” education districts may establish and implement a set of written procedures instead of a policy, provided that the written document explains how the education district will handle situations where students eligible to receive reduced-price or paid meals do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of their meals at the time of service. The policy or standard practice must be implemented throughout the education district.]

[Note: This MSBA/MASA model policy is drafted to be consistent for all grade levels. However, local education districts may vary the meal charge policy for elementary, middle, and high schools.]

[Note: Education districts must follow appropriate debt collection practices when attempting to recover unpaid meal charges.]

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the education district’s nutrition program and that education district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

The Education District will be switching to Community Eligibility Program (CEP). Students will only need to put money into their account if purchasing a la carte or extra items other than the regular menu reimbursable meal. *Students have use of a meal account. When the balance reaches zero, a student may not to this account. When an account reaches this limit, a student shall not be allowed to charge a la carte items until there is a sufficient amount in account. Families may add money to students’ accounts via electronic payment options or by paying at the education district office .*

- B. If the education district receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.
- C. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item.
- D. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the parent or guardian must specify how the funds are to be distributed to the students' accounts. Funds may not be transferred between sibling accounts unless written permission is received from the parent or guardian.

III. LOW ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

The education district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low . Families will be notified through email or letters sent home.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:
 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
 2. students and families who transfer into the education district, at the time of enrollment; and
 3. all education district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. The education district may post the policy on the education district's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4
 42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
 7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)
 7 C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
 USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A