Washington County School District
121 West Tabernacle Street
Saint George, Utah 84770
435-673-3553

District Policy 3331

Child Nutrition Programs

Child Nutrition Washington County School District - Adopted 3-5-2019

1. PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

1.1. The District provides meals to students under the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. Meal charges under these programs are necessary to cover the costs of meals provided to students. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has directed school districts to adopt written policies governing the collection of unpaid meal charges.

1.2. The success of these programs and services depends on parents paying the associated charges. The District strives to provide students with meals despite the inability of some parents to pay. Parents struggling with the financial burden of meal charges may apply for free and reduced price meals as outlined below, and those who qualify may receive assistance. Yet despite these options, many meal charges remain unpaid.

2. POLICY

It is the Policy of the Washington County School District to minimize the amount of unpaid meal charges and to establish procedures for collecting them. District procedures are intended to ensure that employees, students, and parents have a shared understanding of the expectations for payment and collection of meal charges.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1. DEFINITIONS

3.1.1. Automated Meal Payment System: The District's web-based system (e.g. PayPams) which allows parents to deposit funds into their students' meal accounts.

3.1.2. Collection Efforts: Using a collecting agency or other means to collect unpaid meal balances.

3.1.3. Delinquent: A student meal fund account that shows a balance owed.

3.1.4. Non-Program Food: A meal or food component that does not meet the USDA regulations and may not be claimed for payment from the USDA. Examples include adult meals, second meals, extra milk, separate meal components, non-enrolled children meals, classroom snacks, school community events, etc.

3.1.5. Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF): The status of a bank account upon which is drawn a check when the check cannot be honored because insufficient funds are available in the account. An NSF check is also commonly known as a bad check or a bounced check.

3.1.6. Parent: A student's parent, legal guardian, or person acting as the parent for school purposes.

3.1.7. Point of Service: The place in the line where meal payments and counting of reimbursable meals occurs.

3.1.8. Reduced Price Meal: A meal served to a student whose parents have qualified, based on federal standards, to have their child receive a reduced price meal.

3.1.9. Reimbursable Meal: A meal which meets the U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations and may be claimed for payment from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

3.2. PROGRAM INFORMATION

3.2.1. Parents may obtain information about the District's child nutrition program and apply for free and reduced meal benefits on the District website or by contacting the Child Nutrition Department during regular school hours.

3.2.2. In conjunction with student registration, each school will provide information to parents regarding:

- The school meal programs offered;

- Prices for student meals, adult meals, and extra milk;

- Payment options for meals, including, if applicable, the use of discretionary school funds to pay for meals;

- Application procedures to qualify for free and reduced price meals; and

- This policy and any other delinquent meal account practices used by the school.

3.2.3. Schools will send reminders to parents of the payment options and program policy throughout the school year. Schools may use various reasonable and effective means of communication to contact parents, including but not limited to student handbooks, newsletters, announcements, lunch menus, emails, or telephone calls.

3.3. SCHOOL MEALS

3.3.1. All reimbursable meals shall meet the minimum nutrition standards required by the S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch and Breakfast Program and 2010 Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act regulations.

3.3.2. The requirement in Subsection 3.3.1 does not apply to medically authorized special needs diets.

- The Child Nutrition Department will comply with the USDA's disability requirements for modified diets when a student has a documented disability and the state-approved Medical Statement to Request Special Meals, Accommodations, and Milk Substitutions form has been completed.

- The Child Nutrition Department may comply with requests for non-disability medical conditions.

- Accommodations will be made on a case-by-case basis upon receipt of a completed request form.

- Parents should coordinate with their student's school nurse, Section 504 team when making a request for special meals or accommodations.

- The District's school lunch menus are available on the District website.

3.3.3. The price for a paid meal shall comply with the federal Paid Lunch Equity guidelines and be approved by the Board.

3.3.4. The price for non-program foods must be sufficient to cover the full cost of the food, labor, equipment and program operations in accordance with federal regulations.

3.4. FREE AND REDUCED PRICE MEALS

3.4.1. Parents are encouraged to apply online for free and reduced priced meals. Applications are available in a variety of languages on the USDA website. The school must provide paper applications for parents who do not have access to online forms.

3.4.2. If the student's family receives benefits from the Special Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Family Employment Program (FEP), or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), the household qualifies for meals at no charge. Once the school receives notice of the student's or family's eligibility based on participation in one of these programs, the family does not have to complete or submit a free and reduced price application. The Child Nutrition Department will communicate in writing with the parents that their students are eligible for free meals. If a parent or family qualifies under one of these programs and has not received such a letter before school starts, the parent should contact the Child Nutrition Department.

3.4.3. The school may complete an application for free and reduced price meals on behalf of the parents if school personnel have knowledge of the family's financial circumstances. The Child Nutrition Department will notify the parents that an application has been completed on their behalf.

3.4.4. Families can apply for free and reduced price meals at any time during the school year.

3.4.5. If a student repeatedly has no money in his or her meal account, and no meals are sent from home for the student, school administrators and Child Nutrition Department staff will consider the circumstances in the home and may contact the District's Student Services Department and/or the Utah Division of Child and Family Services.

3.4.6. Employees must maintain the confidentiality of the identities of participants in the free and reduced price program.

3.5. PAYMENT

3.5.1. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their student has money in his or her meal account.

3.5.2. Meals can be paid for electronically using the District's automated meal payment system online or at the school with cash or check. Meal payments will be accepted at the school office or by the school lunch clerk. Payments should clearly indicate the account to which the funds should be credited, especially if a parent has multiple children at one school, in which case the payment must indicate which student's account should be credited and the amount to be credited to that student's account.

3.5.3. A school may choose not to accept personal checks from parents who have previously provided a check that was returned from their bank for any reason, including insufficient funds.

3.5.4. If a student qualifies for free meals, no payments are due for the reimbursable meal. If a student qualifies for reduced-price meals, no payments beyond the reduced price are due for the reimbursable meal. However, in both instances payment will be required for any additional food purchases beyond the reimbursable meal.

3.6. NSF CHECKS

Utah law provides specific notice requirements and collection procedures after receipt of an NSF check. Therefore, a school may notify the Legal Department immediately upon receiving an NSF check. In addition, a person who knowingly issues a bad check may be guilty of a crime. The Legal Department may notify law enforcement if it has reason to believe a person has knowingly issued to a school or the District an NSF check.

3.7. SERVING STUDENTS WITH INSUFFICIENT OR NEGATIVE MEAL ACCOUNT BALANCES

3.7.1. A student shall not be denied a full, reimbursable meal based solely on the student's meal account being delinquent or containing insufficient funds to pay for the meal.

3.7.2. School staff will exercise sensitivity and confidentiality in serving students with insufficient funds or delinquent meal accounts. Employees should communicate with parents about insufficient funds or delinquent meal accounts and should generally avoid communicating with students about their accounts. Employees shall not subject a student to embarrassment or

ridicule based on the student's meal account balance.

3.7.3. Students shall not be physically segregated nor discriminated against based on meal account balance or eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

3.7.4. The names or other identifying information of students eligible to receive free or reduced price meals shall not be published or posted in any manner, and there shall be no overt identification of any such students by any means.

3.7.5. A student shall not be denied a meal as a form of discipline.

3.8. COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT MEAL ACCOUNTS

3.8.1. Parents using the District's automated meal payment system online may set a reminder schedule within the system after logging in to notify them of their student's account balance. Parents may also set up the account to automatically replenish when it reaches a specified balance.

3.8.2. Communication about payments for school meals should be directed to a student's parents. In general, employees should not ask students for meal payments or ask them to remind their parents to send money for their meal accounts.

3.8.3. Sometimes a student's account balance reaches zero (0). A student will not be denied a meal for insufficient funds. A student account with insufficient funds to pay for a meal will continue to be charged each time the student receives a meal, thus incurring a balance owed and becoming delinquent. A delinquent meal account is a debt owed by the student's parent that can be collected by the District.

3.8.4. At least once each week the school lunch clerk will notify the parents of all students at the school whose meal account balances show a debt for three (3) or more unpaid meals.

3.8.5. The school principal may contact the parent of any student whose meal account balance becomes delinquent at any time.

3.8.6. The school principal or an assistant principal may send written notice to the parent of a student whose meal account balance shows a debt for twenty (20) or more meals. The notice should notify the parent that the school will begin collection efforts, including employing a collection agency, if the debt is not paid by a specified date.

3.8.7. The school principal or an assistant principal may send written notice to the parent of a student whose meal account is delinquent and who has been unenrolled or who the parent intends to unenroll from the school, whether to move, transfer to another school, or for other reasons. The notice shall notify the parent that the school will begin collection efforts, including employing a collection agency, if the debt is not paid by a specified date.

3.8.8. If written notice has been sent as described in Subsection 9.7 or 9.8 and the debt is not paid by the date specified, the school principal or an assistant principal may assign the debt to a collection agency with which the District has contracted or may file a civil action in court to collect the debt. The principal or an assistant principal will notify the Child Nutrition Department of the assignment or filing of a civil suit.

3.8.9. At the end of each school year, each principal must transfer school funds to the Child Nutrition Department in the amount owed by parents for student meals at the school. Transfer of these funds does not extinguish the debt owed by the parent to the District, and the school should continue its collection efforts. If the debt is collected, in part or in full, the collected funds shall be credited to the school account.

3.8.10. If a student with a delinquent meal account changes schools, the receiving school is not responsible for the debt nor is it required to attempt to collect the debt or transfer school funds to the Child Nutrition Department for the debt. The principal of the school at which the debt accrued must transfer school funds to the Child Nutrition Department in the amount owed. The school at which the debt accrued may continue collection efforts. Transfer of school funds to the Child Nutrition Department does not extinguish the parent's debt.

3.8.11. The Child Nutrition Department and the school at which a debt is accrued shall work together to determine when to designate a delinquent account as bad debt and cease collection efforts, in compliance with federal laws and regulations regarding bad debt as defined by the USDA. The internal transfer of funds between a school and the Child Nutrition Department does not extinguish or satisfy debts owed by parents to the District, and a delinquent account remains collectable until the Child Nutrition Department and school designate it as bad debt under USDA regulations.

3.9. CONSEQUENCES OF DELINQUENT MEAL ACCOUNTS

Schools may deny certain privileges to students whose meal account balances are delinquent. A student with delinquent meal charges may be denied the opportunity to participate in graduation ceremonies, attend reward activities, or receive a yearbook early.