

Child Nutrition Program Charges Policy FDF

A. Purpose and Background

National School Lunch, Breakfast, Special (Kindergarten) Milk and the After School Snack Program are federal programs in which this school participates. Pricing policies for school meals are determined at the local level, including decisions about whether or not to extend credit to parents who do not have meal money in their students' accounts or whether or not to provide alternate meals to such students.

Schools receive partial reimbursement for meals served to students who do not qualify for free meals. Parents must make payments to a student's account to make up the difference between the federal reimbursement and the cost of the meal. This policy applies only to school meal payments, not a la carte sales.

If students qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch, their meals are reimbursed in whole or in part with federal funds. Otherwise, the meal reimbursement is minimal and parents are expected to pay for their student(s)' meals. Schools should adopt policies which minimize unpaid accounts and ensure students are not subject to punishment or stigmatization when parents fail to make school meal payments.

The purpose of this policy is to explain how Kane School District will notify parents/guardians about: money owed for student meals; of the school's procedures for providing meals if students' accounts are delinquent; and to assure and remind parents and school employees that students will never be confronted or embarrassed about money owed for school meals.

B. Scope

This policy applies to all local education agencies (LEAs) that participate in the National School Lunch, Breakfast, Special (Kindergarten) Milk and the After School Snack Programs. The policy is informative for parents whose students participate in the National School Lunch Program. The scope includes requirements and direction for delinquent meal accounts.

C. Notification

Before school begins, parents shall receive information from the student's resident school:

- (a) about school meals;
- (b) stating the prices for the meals;
- (c) informing parents how they may provide payment for meals;
- (d) informing parents how their students qualify for reduced-price or free meals
- (e) informing parents what students will receive if their meal accounts are delinquent; and informing parents of the policy for delinquent accounts.

Schools will send reminders of the policy throughout the school year. Schools may send letters home, send school newsletter reminders, make announcements, make phone calls or use other reasonable and effective means of communication to contact parents.

Schools shall provide applications for free/reduced-price meals to parents. The school shall also provide the school's designated meal prices. Accompanying the

information about the prices of school meals, parents will receive an application for free and reduced price meals. The application is available in a variety of languages at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/family-friendly-application-translations> . The school will provide paper applications for parents who do not have access to on-line forms.

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 student's or family's eligibility, and does not have to complete or submit a free/reduced-price form. Schools will send the household an e-mail/letter informing parents of student(s)' eligibility 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 school food service.

D. Payments and School Verification

A school must verify at some point in each student's meal service, that the meal is reimbursable or non-reimbursable.

A school will credit meal payments from parents to the student's account before the meal period. This assures all funds are accurately applied to meal accounts in advance of students selecting school meals. If a student/family qualifies for free meals, no payments are due.

If a family qualifies for reduced-price meals, the school will charge no more than \$.40 for lunch or \$.30 for breakfast. The LEA sets the price for reduced-price meals.

Parent payment options for student meals may include:

(a) Parents may use an automated payment system, if available, to make payments for students' meals. Parents may make on-line payments, using debit or credit cards, for one or all of their students, allocating the funds to individual students' accounts. The school may add additional fees for the use of a credit card and will notify parents of added fees.

(b) Parents may make payments to the school by mail or hand delivery. Payments should clearly indicate the account to which the funds should be credited (student's name and amount, if several students attend the school). The school will indicate if the school accepts checks, money orders and/or cash. (Parents should note the school policy for checks returned to the school for insufficient funds.)

F. Identification of Delinquent Accounts

Schools will identify family or student accounts that do not have adequate balances to pay for student meals. Schools will identify these accounts weekly and notify parents each week. The school will contact parents, as parents have directed, on the automated meal payment system, or by phone, text or email. Schools may ask students to take notifications addressed to the parent home with them; however, the school may not tell students to "remind" their parents to send money to the school. It is the parent's responsibility to pay the student's account. Asking students to remind parents is inappropriate.

The student will be contacted in advance of the meal service, if the school does not have payment from the parents, to tell the student what action the school will take. The school will take such actions as discretely and sensitively as possible so as not to embarrass the student.

The school may use any of the following options (or other reasonable options) for student meals if a student's meal account is inadequate:

- (a) Student may bring a sack meal from home.
- (b) Schools may continue to provide full meals to elementary students and notify parents that the school will use collection efforts to pay for meals. Schools shall maintain documentation of parent notice.
- (c) School administration may inform students in secondary school (grades 7 – 12) that students cannot choose a school meal because accounts are delinquent.

The school is not required to provide a meal at no cost if a student does not qualify for a free meal. Because federal funds may not be used for the expenses of these meals, the school must use state, local or other funds to cover the cost of the meals. The school will provide notice to parents at designated times during the school year of the school's policy for providing meals to students when accounts are delinquent. If a student's account is delinquent, the school may offer the student an alternate meal. The LEA will comply with all applicable state and federal laws in providing meals to students and in notifying parents.

G. Delinquent Balances and School Procedures

Schools will notify parents of students with delinquent balances in their school lunch accounts by such methods as:

- (a) the automated school lunch payment system;
- (b) e-mail or phone text to the parent;
- (c) written notice sent to the parent by mail or carried home by the student in a sealed envelope;
- (d) telephone conversation with the parent.

If parents have been notified, no payment is received, and the amount owed exceeds \$100, the account may be turned over to a collection agency (no federal funds may be used for the collection of funds). Schools will notify parents at least twice annually concerning their procedures for the collection of past-due accounts.

The school may complete an application for free/reduced-price meals on behalf of the parents, if school personnel have knowledge of the parent's financial circumstances and parents give permission. The school will notify parents that an application has been completed on their behalf ("Eligibility Manual for School Meals," August, 2013, pg. 36).

If a student repeatedly has no money in the student's school lunch account and no student meals are provided from home, school officials will consider the circumstances in the home (e.g., potential abuse or neglect, homelessness, etc.) and may contact the LEA's social worker and/or Child Protective Services.

Schools may use collection agencies to collect on delinquent accounts. They may also set aside or raise funds which may be used for payment of delinquent accounts. Parent organizations may hold fundraisers and individuals may donate funds

to be used for such accounts. Schools will determine and notify all parents of the school's standards for paying for students' lunches with school discretionary funds and/or using collection agencies.