

Adopted: August 18, 2022

***Sartell-St. Stephen School District 748
Policy 534***

*Revised: October 23, 2023
August 12, 2024*

Reviewed:

534 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school district's nutrition services program and that school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy of the school district is to provide meals to students in a respectful manner and to maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student. 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 a la carte items as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. All a la carte and second meals items are to be prepaid before meal service begins. Students will not be allowed to purchase a la carte and second meal items without money in their account to cover the purchase or without cash on hand to cover the purchase. Families may add money to their students' accounts online through skyward, or by sending cash/check to the school office.
- B. If the school district participates in the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch program and has an Identified Student Percentage below the federal percentage determined for all meals to be reimbursed at the free rate via the Community Eligibility Provision must participate in the free school meals program.
- C. Each school that participates in the free school meals program must:
 - 1. participate in the United States Department of Agriculture School Breakfast Program and the United States Department of Agriculture National School Lunch Program; and
 - 2. provide to all students at no cost up to two federally reimbursable meals per school day, with a maximum of one free breakfast and one free lunch.
 - 3. serve a reimbursable meal to all students regardless of a negative balance.

- D. Once a meal has been placed on a student's tray or otherwise served to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meal balance.
- E. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a la carte items and/or second meals.
- F. For families with multiple children in the district, funds are available through any of the students accounts. It is a shared family account.

III. NEGATIVE & LOW ACCOUNT BALANCE NOTIFICATIONS

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances fall low or below zero.
- B. Families are encouraged to monitor meal account balances and make online payments in Skyward/RevTrak.
- C. Families are notified via Skylert (call/text/email) if an outstanding low or negative balance occurs.
- D. Families can contact the Nutrition Services office for account balances or students can ask the cashiers.
- E. If a family has a negative \$50 or more balance, they will receive a letter in the mail to notify them of the unpaid account balance.
- F. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program, including, but not limited to, dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, announcing or listing students' names publicly, providing alternative meals not specifically related to dietary needs; providing nonreimbursable meals; or affixing stickers, ID's, or stamps.

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free or/and reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. The school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.

- C. Negative balances of more than negative \$100, not paid prior to the end of the school year, will be turned over to the director of business services for collection. In some instances, the school district does use a collection agency to collect unpaid school meal debts after reasonable efforts first have been made by the school district to collect the debt. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.
- D. When the student meal balance is negative \$100 or more, the following collection actions will be taken:
 - 1. A formal letter will be sent to the household notifying that the debt will be turned over to the collection agency.
 - 2. When requested, the Nutrition Services Department at Sartell-St. Stephen ISD 748 will work with families to set up a payment plan to clear the unpaid school meal debt.
 - 3. The expectation is all fees owed to the district will be paid in full on the last day the student will be attending classes.
 - 4. Assistance from the county social services may be requested by the school if parents refuse to provide meals or pay for school prepared meals for their children.
 - 5. If payment is not received to cover the unpaid meal debt, Sartell-St. Stephen ISD 748 will utilize collection agency services to collect unpaid school meal debt.
- E. The school district will not impose any other restriction prohibited under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.37 due to unpaid student meal balances. The school district will not limit a student's participation in any school activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, or other extracurricular activities or access to materials, technology, or other items provided to students due to an unpaid student meal balance.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing to:
 - 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
 - 2. students and families who transfer into the school district, at the time of enrollment; and

3. all school district personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. The school district will post this policy on the school district's website, or the website of the organization where the meal is served, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.
 - C. If the school district contracts with a third party for its meal services, it will provide the vendor with its school meals policy. The school district will ensure that any third-party provider with whom the school district enters into either an original or modified contract after July 1, 2021, adheres to the school district's school meals policy.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 123B.37 (Prohibited Fees)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.111 (School Meals Policies; Lunch Aid; Food Service Accounting)
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

Cross References: None

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
program.intake@usda.gov

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