

## EF-E 1

### **School Meal Payments and Limited Meal Charges**

The Buena Vista School District is committed to ensuring that all students receive the nutrition they need to engage in active learning during the school day. In accordance with applicable federal guidance from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), this policy is intended to serve the purposes of meeting student needs, minimizing the identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals and maintaining the fiscal integrity of the district's school food service account.

#### **Student meal accounts and limited meal charges**

Student meal accounts shall be established by the district.

Parents will be encouraged to pre-pay for students paying full or reduced price for meals. The district shall ensure that parents have access to at least one no-cost method of paying for meal services, such as the ability to pay in person. At the time funds are distributed into student accounts, parents will be permitted to limit the amount of funds that a student may use daily, including for á la carte purchases.

Students will be permitted to pay for meals and/or add funds to student accounts on the day of service.

If a student has money to purchase a full or reduced-price meal at the time of the meal service, the student must be provided a meal. The student's money may not be used to repay previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that day's meal. This does not include ala carte items.

A meal account balance remains with the student until the student is no longer enrolled in the district. Students with unused credit in their accounts at the point of disenrollment or graduation will have the option of a refund or a transfer of the funds to a siblings account.

Students paying full or reduced price for meals and who do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of a meal at the time of service will be permitted to charge a meal. However, these students will be denied permission to charge á la carte or "extra" items, such as a second milk or additional entrée.

Students paying full or reduced price for meals and who do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of a meal at the time of service shall receive a complimentary meal. Students may be limited to complimentary replacement meals per school year. Parents will be responsible for payment for these meals.

### **Notification of low or negative balances**

Notification of a low balance on a student account will be provided privately. The School Food Authority (SFA) will make every attempt to collect all meal debts. Households will be notified of low or negative balances via email, text, phone call and/or a letter to the household from the SFA. The SFA will work with the Parent/Guardian to collect the total amount due.

When notified of a low balance on a student account, parents will be reminded of this policy and the process for submitting applications for free or reduced-price meal benefits. Parents will also be notified that any school meal debt accrued prior to the district's determination that the student is eligible for free or reduced lunch remains the parent's responsibility.

### **Collection of meal charge debt**

In collecting debt, the SFA shall ensure that collection efforts do not have a negative impact on the students involved and instead focus on the adult(s) in the household responsible for providing funds for student meal purchases. Collection efforts from one school year may continue into the following school year, including when students transfer to a school outside of the district.

The District will work with parents to establish repayment plans with payment levels and due dates appropriate to the household's particular circumstances.

### **Annual notice**

The District will notify students and their parents about this policy at the beginning of each school year. Notification shall also be provided to those students who transfer into the district during the school year. Information about this policy may also be included in student handbooks, student enrollment or registration packets and/or back-to-school packets and posted on district and school websites.

This policy will also be communicated to school and district-level staff responsible for this policy's enforcement, such as school food service staff responsible for collecting payment for meals at the point of service, staff involved in notifying families of low or negative balances, and staff involved in enforcing any other aspects of this policy.

Adopted by the superintendent: June 27, 2022

LEGAL REF.: USDA Guidance SP 46-2016 (requires written policy regarding unpaid meal charges)