

Meal Charge and Debt Collection Procedure

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish meal account maintenance in the provision of meals to students.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF PROCEDURE

- A. Hutchinson Public School's goal is to provide nutritious meals to students to promote healthy eating habits and enhance learning.
- B. It is the policy of Hutchinson Public Schools to offer breakfast and lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.

- The purchase of school meals is set up on a prepaid basis. Families are required to have funds deposited into school meal accounts in order for students to purchase meals.
- Students who qualify for "paid" meal benefit may purchase meals when funds have been deposited into their family accounts.
- Our district strives to ensure that nutritious meals are available to all students, but must insist that a student's prepaid meal account be kept up to date in order to avoid passing on debt to other paying families.
- Students have the option to purchase a la carte items, but only with a positive meal fund balance.

C. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are available to all families online and can be accessed through the Tiger portal. In addition, applications are available at Central Office located at 30 Glen Street Northwest, Hutchinson, between the hours of 7:15 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. If household income or size change, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

III. CHARGE POLICY

- A. If the student or family account is less than adequate to pay for breakfast and/or lunch,
 - Students will be allowed to charge up to \$5.00.
 - All students will be provided a meal regardless of meal account status. The district is under no legal obligation to act; we believe that this is in the best interest of the student.
 - Students are not allowed to charge a la carte items.
 - Students are not allowed to purchase any ala carte items if the account is negative.

IV. NOTIFICATION OF ACCOUNT STATUS

- Families can check their student's meal account balance via their Tiger Portal account.
- Families can contact the office for account balances.
- The Food Service Department will send a weekly email on Thursdays to all parents advising them of the student meal account balances.
- The Food Service Department will send a letter to the household if account balances remain negative after two email reminders.
- Students will be given a written and/or verbal reminder in the meal service line.

B. The student/family will be notified when the account has a balance of \$5.00.

- Weekly emails will be sent daily to all payors of the family with a negative food service account.
- The Food Service Department will encourage parents to complete the free/reduced-price meal application.
- An email reminder is sent to parents requesting a payment when student accounts do not have adequate funds.
- A second request for payment is sent if parents have not responded to the first request.
- A letter/invoice is sent via US Post to the household requesting payment.
- NSF checks will follow the district "bad check" policy (available at Central Office; address listed on Page 1).

V. COLLECTION OF UNPAID MEAL DEBT

Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals will always be served a meal regardless of unpaid food service accounts. When a student has "cash in hand" to pay for a meal, the student will be served a meal regardless of unpaid foodservice accounts. The "cash in hand" will not be applied towards past due balances.

When the student meal balance is negative five dollars (-\$5.00), the following collection actions will be taken at all district schools.

- The food service assistant will contact the household to request payment. Phone calls will be placed primary and collection demand letters will follow.
- 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.
- A formal letter will be sent to the household notifying that the debt will be turned over to the collection agency and the student meal account will be closed.

- The expectation is all fees owed to the District will be paid in full on the last day the student will be attending classes.

Source: Independent School District #423

Reviewed: 9/7/2022

Approved: