

Food Service Charging**Definitions**

“**Delinquent Debt**” are unpaid meal charges, like any other money owed to the non-profit Food Service provider when payment is overdue, as defined by state or local policies.

“**Bad Debt**” are when unpaid meal charges are not collected and are considered a loss. Such debt must be written off as operating loss, which cannot be absorbed by the non-profit Food Service provider, but must be restored using non-federal funds.

Payment and Charging of School Meals

The Food Service provider uses www.mypaymentsplus.com, an online pre-payment service, which allows parents/guardians to view their child’s meal account balances, purchases, receive low balance notifications and make deposits to their child’s school meal account.

Adults are not allowed to charge any meals or a la carte items and must use the pre-payment plan or pay cash at the time of purchase.

Low or Negative School Lunch Account Balance

The Food Service provider will notify the District of all students with a negative balance on their school lunch account, on a monthly basis.

The Food Service provider will notify parents/guardians, on a monthly basis, when a child's school lunch account has a negative balance, indicating that a payment is due.

No child will be denied a school meal due to lack of pre-payment, however, the process set forth below shall be followed whenever a child does not have sufficient funds in his/her school meal account.

Students may charge up to \$10.00 for school meals.

Step 1

If a student's school lunch account reaches the \$10.00 maximum for charging, the Food Service provider will send home a letter to the parents/guardians informing them of the obligation due and request that they deposit funds into the student's meal account.

This letter will explain that once a student's lunch account reaches the \$10.00 maximum for charging, the student will be served an alternative meal consisting of milk, fruit or vegetable, and a cheese or peanut butter sandwich (unless there is a medically documented allergy or dietary restriction). The letter will further explain that the alternative meal shall be charged to the student's account.

Students will not be allowed to charge snack or a la carte items.

Step 2

The Food Service provider will notify school's administration when a student's meal account reaches a negative \$20.00, at which time the school guidance counselor will contact the parent/guardian by phone and provide information regarding the Free and Reduced-Price School Meal Program, if applicable.

Step 3

If, after multiple attempts to collect an outstanding balance, sufficient funds are not deposited into the student's school meal account, the Superintendent's office will send a certified letter to the parent/guardian notifying them of the outstanding balance and request for payment. If necessary, the Superintendent shall also schedule a meeting with parent/guardian to discuss the arrearage.

Prior to a student withdrawing from the District, school meal accounts must be paid in full. Failure to do so may result in the District withholding the transfer of student records, transcripts and report cards.

Delinquent Debt and Bad Debt

The District's efforts to recover from household's money owed due to the charging of meals must not have a negative impact on the children involved and shall focus primarily on the adults in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases.

Money owed because of unpaid meal charges shall be considered delinquent debt, as defined, if it is considered collectable and reasonable efforts are being made to collect it. Such debt must be paid by June 30 of each school year.

After reasonable attempts are made to collect the delinquent debt, and it is determined that further collection efforts are useless or too costly, the debt must be reclassified as bad debt. Such debt shall be written off as an operating loss not to be absorbed by the non-profit Food Service provider but must be restored using non-federal funds.

Refund of School Meal Account Balances

When a student leaves the District, the Superintendent or his/her designee must attempt to contact the student's household to return any funds remaining in the student's account that is equal to or exceeds the price of one (1) school meal. The District may encourage families that are not approved for free or reduced-price meals to donate the funds remaining in their account rather than receiving a refund when their child leaves the school. These funds may be used to cover unpaid meal charges that were uncollectable.

The parent/guardian of a student with a positive account balance who is no longer enrolled at Bethany Community School must send a written request to the Superintendent's Office, 44 Peck Road, Bethany, CT 06524 indicating the student name, parent/guardian name, address to mail refund and a contact phone number within sixty (60) days from the date the student leaves the District. After the sixty (60) day expiration, any remaining funds will be donated to the District and may be used to cover unpaid meal charges that were uncollectable.

Households approved for reduced price meal benefits must receive a refund regardless of the amount. There is a Federal requirement that children eligible for reduced price meals pay a maximum of 40 cents per lunch; retaining the unused funds would result in the per meal lunch price exceeding this amount.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy and administrative regulation shall be provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the District during the school year.

This policy and administrative regulation shall be included in the student/parent handbook, on online portals that households use to access student accounts, placed on the District's website, and published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced-price meals and again to the household the first time the policy is applied to a specific child.

This policy and administrative regulation shall be provided to all school staff and the Food Service provider responsible for its enforcement.

The District shall maintain, as required, documentation of the methods used to communicate this policy and administrative regulation to households, Food Service provider staff, and school staff responsible for its enforcement.

Legal Reference: Operational Memorandum #4-17, Guidance on Unpaid Meal Charges and Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments, Connecticut State Department of Education (November 2, 2016).

United States Department of Agriculture, SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (July 8, 2016).

United States Department of Agriculture, SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payment (July 8, 2016).

United States Department of Agriculture, SP 57-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q and A (September 16, 2016).

United States Department of Agriculture, SP 58-2016, 2016 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies for Our Nation's Schools (September 19, 2016).

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