



Nutrition Services Meal Charge Standard Practice

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) has determined children and their families must be informed about how children who pay full-price (paid rate) or reduced-price for a reimbursable meal are impacted by having insufficient funds on hand or in their account to purchase a meal. There is no Federal regulation that require school districts to serve meals to a child who does not have sufficient funds to purchase one; however, Five Star Schools Nutrition Services has developed a practice to address this issue. Meal charge privileges are at the discretion of Nutrition Services and evaluated on an annual basis.

The following standard practices are to be utilized when handling unpaid meal account balances, the collections of delinquent meal payments and uncollectible delinquent debt or bad debt. The standard practice is provided in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households transferring to the school district during the school year by way of student handbooks/packets, the enrollment process and district website. All school and district-level staff members responsible for enforcement will receive a written copy of the standard practice by way of the annual Nutrition Services Administrative Guide.

Definitions

- Reimbursable Meal – Meals that are eligible for Federal Reimbursement.
- Charged Meal – Any reimbursable meal purchased that takes the account balance below \$0.00.
- Complimentary Meal - A complimentary meal is offered at no cost when a student has reached the charge limit for their grade level. A complimentary meal is a reimbursable meal.
- A la Carte – Single items offered in addition to or separate from the reimbursable meal such as: bottled beverages, milk, extra entrees, snack items, etc.
- NSFSA – Nonprofit School Food Service Account.

UNPAID MEAL ACCOUNTS

Allowable Charges

Charged meals are directly applied to the student's meal account within the point of sale system.

Students are not allowed to charge la carte items, however they may purchase these items with cash in hand.

- Grades K-5: Charged meals are allowed up to a negative \$8.00 balance.
- Grades 6-8: Charged meals are allowed up to a negative \$6.00 balance.
- Grades 9-12: Charged meals are allowed up to a negative \$3.00 balance.

Complimentary Meals

Complimentary meals are recorded in the student's meal account for grades K-8 within the point of sale system. If a complimentary meal is served, the household is notified. Parent/guardians are provided with the amount due and payment options, as well as meal benefit applications, if needed.

Complimentary meals are not offered to grades 9-12.

PREVENTION OF UNPAID MEAL ACCOUNTS

Account Management and Payment Options

Prepayment is encouraged via cash, check, or online at payforit.net. At Payforit, parents may set low balance auto notification and auto refill payments. Parents can also contact school kitchens directly to discuss account balances. As account balances decline, verbal reminders may be given to students.

Meal Benefits

Households are encouraged to complete a meal benefit application annually. Applications are available online, in the school kitchen and from the Nutrition Services office located at 1500 E128th Ave, Thornton, CO 80241.

Communication

School Messenger automatic calls and emails to families may be sent for students with negative balances until the account is brought current. Families can have this turned off by contacting Nutrition Services. If patterns develop with students who consistently do not have money for meals, the Kitchen Manager may discuss this with the Principal, Counselor, student or family to determine the best solution for the student.

COLLECTIONS OF UNPAID MEAL ACCOUNTS

Delinquent Debt

As defined by USDA, delinquent debt includes unpaid meal charges that are considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect them. Delinquent debt, or a negative balance, remains on the accounting documents (accounts receivable) until it is either collected or is determined to be uncollectable and written off. Nutrition Services considers student accounts with negative balances to be in delinquent status. During the time a student has a negative balance or delinquent debt, full or partial payments may be collected at any time online or with cash or check to bring the account current.

Bad Debt

Delinquent debts which have been determined to be uncollectable will be reclassified as “bad debt”. Nutrition Services considers student accounts with uncollectible delinquent balances to be “bad debt” when collection efforts have been unsuccessful after a student leaves the district or graduates. Repayment of “bad debt” is an unallowable expense for the NSFSA per [USDA memorandum SP 47-2016](#); therefore, payment for this bad debt balance must come from other sources such as:

- Other non-federal sources
- The district’s general fund
- Donations
- Special funding from state or local governments

Donations

Nutrition Services recognizes that there may be occasions where community members or outside agencies not associated with the National School Breakfast or Lunch Program may want to make a donation with the purposes of funding meals for students who have exceeded the maximum charge limit. Regardless of their source, donations will be accepted and applied to district bad debt on an annual basis.