

534 Unpaid Meal Charges - MSBA Mandated

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through the school district's nutrition program and that North Shore Community School (NSCS) school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. 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 school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. Payment of Meals

A. All students at NSCS have a school lunch account. All meals are prepaid before meal service. Payments can be made before meal service begins in the Cafeteria with a check or online at <https://www.k12paymentcenter.com/>.

B. If NSCS receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.

C. A student with an outstanding meal charge debt will be allowed to receive a meal which will be charged to the student's account.

D. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a snack item.

E. If a parent or guardian chooses to send in one payment that is to be divided between sibling accounts, the parent or guardian must specify how the funds are to be distributed to the students' accounts. Funds may not be transferred between sibling accounts unless written permission is received from the parent or guardian.

III. Low or Negative Account Balance

A. NSCS will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.

B. Families will be notified of an outstanding negative balance every evening once the negative balance reaches negative \$5.00. Families will be notified by an automated instant alert calling system and/or letters sent home.

C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program.

IV. Unpaid Meal Charges

A. NSCS 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 and reduced-price meals for their children.

B. NSCS 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 \$24.00, twenty-four dollars, not paid prior to the end of the school year, will be turned over to the Director or Business Manager for collection. 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. NSCS may not enlist the assistance of non-school district employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.

V. Communication of Policy

A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) 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. NSCS will post the policy on the school district's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Legal References: *Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4*
 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

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