

Unpaid Meal Charge and Debt Collection Procedure

Introduction

Beginning July 1, 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) required all Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to have a written and clearly communicated meal charge policy or procedure which needs to be distributed to households at the start of each school year. The policy/procedure should articulate how students will be charged for meals, as well as offering alternate meals, limits on meal charges, or allowing neither meal charges nor alternate meals when a student's account has insufficient funds. Per USDA guidance, the specific policy/procedure is at the discretion of each school food authority and must include information about how unpaid meal debt will be collected. It is important that all staff who could be responsible for enforcement, including food service staff, office/administrative staff, principals, social workers, homeless liaison, etc., be aware of the policy.

When districts notify households of the meal charge and collection policy/procedure, multiple methods of distributing the information should be used. Options are to include it in the student/parent handbook, the back-to-school free/reduced-price meal application, school/district newsletter, or posted on the school/district website. However, USDA requires that all LEAs provide written information directly to households. **Posting the policy on the district website alone is not sufficient.**

USDA does not require the local school board to formally approve the policy/procedure.

Unpaid Meal Charge and Debt Collection

I. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to establish consistent district practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts and the collection of unpaid meal debt.

II. General Statement of Procedure

- A. White Mountains Regional School District's goal is to provide nutritious meals to students to promote healthy eating habits and enhance learning as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Breakfast and Lunch program and eliminate stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges.
- B. It is the policy of the White Mountains Regional School District to offer Breakfast and Lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
- C. Parents in the White Mountains Regional School District may pay for meals upfront daily, weekly, monthly, yearly at the school and/or online at www.ezschoollpay.com.
- D. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are distributed to all families in the district on the student's first day of classes. In addition, applications are available online at www.ezmealapp.com, in each school's office, or cafeteria. If household income or size change, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

III. Charge Procedure

- A. If the student or family account has insufficient funds to pay for breakfast and/or lunch meals, the student(s) will be provided a meal regardless of their meal account balance.
- B. Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals will always be served a meal regardless of unpaid food service accounts. When a student eligible for PAID meals 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.
- C. Students with an overdrawn account are not allowed to charge a la carte items.

IV. Notification of Account Status

- A. Families can check their student's meal account balance via Powerschool Parent or by creating an account at www.ezschoollpay.com.
- B. Families may contact the White Mountains Regional School District Food Service Director, Melodie Stevens at (603) 837-9031 or email mstevens@sau36.org for account balances or concerns.

- C. The Food Service Department will send weekly emails to parents advising them of the student meal account negative balance(s).
- D. Phone calls to the parents will be made when negative balances reach \$30.00.
- E. Notices will be mailed monthly to parents when negative balances are over \$30.00.
- F. It is the expectation that the parents will be responsible for their child's meal account balances and that all balances owed will be paid in full by the last day of the school year (June).
- G. Balances will be paid to the Food Service Account by the School District out of the General Fund. However, the District will continue to collect the unpaid bills from parents to reimburse the General Fund. Overdue balances may be subject to legal action.