

NONINSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

School Meal Charging Procedures

The intent of these procedures is to ensure responsible financial management of the Food and Nutrition Services Program as well as a consistent and transparent student-oriented practice at each school. These procedures are intended to be proactive and appropriate for families and provide direction and timelines for the responsible management of student meal accounts.

Payments to load money into student lunch accounts can be made at the school office, the Food and Nutrition Services Department, in the cafeteria, over the phone and online. Online payments and more information can be found on the district website.

Meal Account Balances:

1. The goal is for lunch accounts to remain positive.
2. All efforts shall be made to communicate with the student's household by Food Services and/or the authorized building designee so payments can be made or meal benefits issued to qualifying families.
3. The authorized building designee will be notified by Food Services staff when an account negative balance reaches the equivalent of five (5) full priced lunches. The authorized building designee will connect with families and problem solve.
4. Charge limits will apply for all students determined ineligible for free or reduced-price meals in accordance with RCW 28A.235.270.
5. Regardless of free or reduced-price meal status, the purchase of a la carte items are strictly prohibited when an account is negative or will become negative due to the charge.
6. The sale of a la carte items to a student with meal debt is prohibited until the account is paid in full. This clause applies to secondary students only. Elementary students wishing to purchase milk and juice can do so as long as they are able to pay at the time of purchase.
7. Non-students (adults and children not enrolled) are prohibited from accruing a negative meal account balance. All purchases must be paid for at the time of service.
8. Meal account balances (positive and negative) carry over to the next school year for active students.

To help students maintain a positive meal account balance, the District does the following:

1. Issues: twice-weekly automated negative meal account balance notifications to families owing money.
2. Issues: automated low balance e-mail notifications to families when their student's account reaches the equivalent cost of five (5) full price elementary lunches.
3. Makes available: on-line application for meal benefits.
4. Makes available: paper applications at each school office and/or in their opening school year paperwork packet, printable online applications translated into multiple languages, a paper application attached to the calendar mailing that goes to each household during the summer months.
5. The authorized building designee provides outreach to help families determine eligibility for meal assistance.

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6. Regularly (weekly/monthly) runs Direct Certification Process to qualify as many students as possible for meal benefits using State qualification data.
7. The District Homeless Liaison will coordinate with the program to ensure each homeless, foster, runaway and migrant student has proper access to free school meals.
8. 30-day carry-over of free or reduced-price meal status from the previous school year to allow time for a new application to be submitted and processed.
9. Occasional sealed envelopes addressed to the parent/guardian with the account balance statements sent home with the student. The District may also mail or e-mail statements to the parent/guardian.
10. Encourages donations to the District Angel Fund account to help students struggling with meal account debt.

Meal Accounts that are Negative:

1. Paid-price students (students who do not qualify for the free or reduced-price meal program) are a very important part of our meal program; students whose meal accounts remain in good standing will never be denied access to a lunch or breakfast.
2. In accordance with RCW 28A.235.270, students who do not qualify for free or reduced-price meal benefits will have 30 days from notification of a negative account balance to provide documentation to qualify for free or reduced-price benefits. No fewer than two attempts will be made to contact the student's parent/guardian to submit an application. Balances accrued during this time are payable to the School District regardless of the meal status qualification determination. It is important to turn application materials into the Food and Nutrition Services Department during the 30-day carry-over (or) as soon as the student enrolls in the School District (or) if the family has a loss of income during the school year that would change the benefit status so these charges are avoided. Students may be denied access to a school meal if the family is determined to be ineligible for free or reduced-price meals or fails to provide documentation to certify the student is eligible within the 30-day notification window.
3. The Food and Nutrition Services Department will communicate with the household that reaches the 30-day limit or is determined ineligible for free or reduced-price meals that meals will no longer be available in the cafeteria until the meal account balance has been paid in full, a payment plan has been established, or the student becomes eligible for free or reduced-price meal benefits.

For 2. and 3. (above) the District does the following:

- a. Automated call to household as soon as the student's account is negative. The household will have 30 days from this notification to pay the account in full and keep it in good standing or attempt to qualify for free and reduced-price benefits.
- b. Automated e-mail and outreach by the authorized building designee to the household if account reaches the equivalent of five (5) full price elementary lunches (first attempt).
- c. If the account continues to accrue debt and the authorized building designee has not been successful in problem-solving, the Director of Food and Nutrition Services will contact the Principal to attempt to contact the family and problem-solve (second attempt).

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- d. If the family is determined to be ineligible during this period and will not pay the debt, the student meal account will be locked until the debt has been paid in full or a payment plan has been established with the Food and Nutrition Services Department. During this time, the family will be asked to provide meals for their student and to apply for meal benefits if they become eligible. If a payment plan is not established, the lock on the students account will prevent a sale to the student and any more accumulated debt. In accordance with House Bill 2610, if the student attempts to purchase a meal after their account is locked, the meal will not be taken away or disposed of. Continued efforts will be made to help the family qualify for free or reduced-price meal benefits.
- e. If the family is determined to be eligible for free or reduced-price benefits during this period, the family will be asked to pay what they can towards the accrued debt or set-up a payment plan. If other resources are available to help pay off the meal debt, those will be utilized equitably. Meals will be available for the student and the account will not be locked even if the debt cannot be paid in full.
- f. Automated communications will be sent in the Spring to any graduating senior in an effort to collect unpaid meal debt before the student becomes inactive.

Inactive Payor Meal Account Balances (Positive):

Inactive payor balances will be assessed annually. Depending on the student's free or reduced-price meal status and the family's request, balances will either be refunded, transferred to another student's account, or donated to the District "Angel Fund".

Unclaimed Property:

Positive meal account balances inactive for two years will be reported to the Department of Revenue in accordance with the Washington State Department of Revenue guidance.

Inactive Payor Meal Account Balances (Negative-Bad Debt):

Inactive payor debt balances will be assessed annually and collection efforts made in accordance with district accounting procedures. Debts determined to be bad debt will be written off following State and District procedures. Operating loss due to meal account bad debt may not be absorbed by the nonprofit school food services account; these losses must be restored to the account using non-federal sources.

Protecting Students Confidentiality:

The Food and Nutrition Services Department strives to serve each student with dignity and respect. Hand stamps, posting rosters of outstanding meal debt, stickers, or any other means of overt identification of a student with unpaid meal debt is prohibited. Students with unpaid meal debt shall not be required to work off their debt.

Direct Communication with Households:

Communication regarding unpaid meal balances will be directed to parents or guardians. If a student asks about their meal account balance or attempts to purchase a la carte items without funds, the cashier will communicate as discreetly as possible with the student to clarify purchasing rules and to help answer the student's questions. The meal charging procedures will be provided to all households in writing at the beginning of each school year and are available online for any household joining the school district mid-year.

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Repaying an NSF Check (non-sufficient funds at bank):

In accordance with district accounting procedures, repayment for NSF checks will be made directly to the Accounting Office. Until fines are paid, cashiers will no longer accept checks from the household.

District Donated "Angel Fund" Process:

Angel Fund Definition: an account that contains money donated to the District for the purpose of helping students manage their meal debt.

Distribution of Angel Funds to cover meal debt will vary each school year depending on the funds available. Angel Funds will be used in the following order:

1. McKinney-Vento (MV) Students
When the Food and Nutrition Services Department is notified of a student being qualified for MV, they will use the District Angel Fund to pay off outstanding meal debt (as funds are available).
2. Students Qualified for Free or Reduced-Price Meals
Students qualified for free or reduced-price meals will be reviewed monthly. The Food and Nutrition Services Department will apply a dollar limit from the District Angel Fund for each student account to help cover meal debt accrued. The dollar limit is determined by funds available at the time the meal account assessment is conducted. If the student has more meal debt than the District Angel Funds allotment, the Food and Nutrition Services Department will contact the student's school to see if there are any school-based donated funds available.

End of the School Year

If Angel Funds are available at the end of the school year, a round of allotments will be reviewed in the following order:

1. Students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals that have remaining meal debt after first round of allotment
2. Graduating seniors with meal debt
3. Paid students with meal debt

Non-Discrimination:

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **Mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **Fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **Email:**
program.intake@usda.gov

HB 2610, RCW 28A.235.270, SP 47-2016, SP 46-2016, 2 CFR 200.426, 2 CFR 200 sub E, 7CFR 210.19(a), 7 CFR 220.13(i), 7 CFR Sec.245.6(d). 7 CFR 210.9(b), 7 CFR 210.15(b)

Submitted:

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