

Effective Date 7-1-17

Howard School District Meal Charge Policy

I. Federal Requirement

The purpose of this policy is to address the need for school food authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to institute and clearly communicate a meal charge policy, which would include, if applicable, the availability of alternate meals. Because all students in participating schools may receive reimbursable school meals, all SFAs must have a policy in place for children who are participating at the reduced price or paid rate, but either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. Such a policy ensures that school food service professionals, school administrators, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations in these situations.

This requirement is referred to a “policy,” but whether this is referred to as a “policy” or “standard practice” is at the discretion of the SFA. Regardless of terminology is used, the policy or standard practice must consist of a written document explaining how the SFA will handle situations where children eligible to receive reduced price or paid meals do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of their meal at the time of service. The policy or standard practice must be implemented throughout the SFA.

You can find more information about this US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requirement at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/unpaid-meal-charges>.

2. PURPOSE OF POLICY:

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the food service department. The goals of this standard of practice are:

- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts
- To support positive situations with district staff, district business policies, student and parent/guardian to the maximum extent possible
- To establish policies that are age appropriate
- To encourage parent/guardian to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student
- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges

3. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY:

- The food service department, Business Manager, Administrative Assistants: Responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying the student's parent/guardian.
- The Parent/Guardian: Immediate payment

4. ADMINISTRATION

1. Families are encouraged to apply for free and reduced price meal benefit. Any family that falls into a negative balance will receive a written notification to encourage them to apply for free or reduced price meal benefits.
2. Families are encouraged to pre-pay for meals and money is accepted in the school office daily for payments on the day of service. Written notification of prepayment options occurs at the beginning of each school year, is given to each new transfer student, is posted on the Food Service website, and is included in the student handbook.
3. Families will be notified of the school Unpaid Meal Charge Policy in writing before the school year begins and with each new transfer student. This policy will also be posted on the Food Service Website.
4. If a family chooses to limit their child(ren) the amount of funds that may be used daily for a la carte purchases, they may do so by contacting the business office.

5. Elementary (K-5) students:

- a. Statements will be sent home after the end of each month given to the student by their classroom teacher. Accounts have less than \$10 credit remaining on account will receive additional statements until the balance is over \$10.00 credit.
- b. Statements will be mailed to the home address if payment is not received.
- c. Accounts that exceed \$100 due will be called to notify immediate payment is required and failure to provide payment places the students on a cash only basis. Cash payment must be made in the business office prior to meal service time in order for the student to be served.
- d. All delinquent accounts at the beginning of May of the current school year will be subject to collections for payment.

6. Students Grades 6, 7, 8:

- a. Statements will be sent home after the end of each month given to the student by their English teacher. Accounts have less than \$10 credit remaining on account will receive additional statements until the balance is over \$10.00 credit.
- b. Statements will be mailed to the home address if payment is not received.

- c. No charges are allowed for extras or a la carte foods on any negative accounts or accounts with a zero balance. Students will be notified discreetly prior to serving time.
- d. Accounts that exceed \$100 due will be called to notify immediate payment is required and failure to provide payment places the students on a cash only basis. Cash payment must be made in the business office prior to meal service time in order for the student to be served.
- e. All delinquent accounts at the beginning of May of the current school year will be subject to collections for payment.

7. Students Grades 9-12:

- a. Statements will be sent home after the end of each month given to the student by their English teacher. Accounts have less than \$10 credit remaining on account will receive additional statements until the balance is over \$10.00 credit.
- b. Statements will be mailed to the home address if payment is not received.
- c. No charges are allowed for extras or a la carte foods on any negative accounts or accounts with a zero balance. Students will be notified discreetly prior to serving time.
- d. Accounts that exceed \$100 due will be called to notify immediate payment is required and failure to provide payment places the students on a cash only basis. Cash payment must be made in the business office prior to meal service time in order for the student to be served.
- e. All delinquent accounts at the beginning of May of the current school year will be subject to collections for payment.

8. Denying meals or providing alternate meals.

Students Grades K-12 with accounts having a negative balance of \$100 or greater and not providing cash payment for the day's meal will be denied service of the regular reimbursable meal. Parents will be called requesting cash payment. If payment is not received prior to meal time, students will be discreetly notified and offered the alternative meal of a carton of milk and cheese sandwich.

9. Payment plans

Household are encouraged to make continuous payments to maintain a credit balance at all times. The school district will work with families to apply for free and reduced priced lunches whenever eligible. Agreements may be established allowing a household to make payments to reduce the debt of their unpaid meal charges over a period of time in a manner that is feasible for both the school district and the household.

