



Adopted: 2005

*MSBA/MASA Model Policy 534  
Orig. 2017*

Revised: 2018

## **534 UNPAID MEAL CHARGES**

### **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 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. Students have use of a meal account. This account will track students' food purchases and charge the account for meals. No student will be denied a meal, even if their account falls into a negative balance. The student will receive a regular meal and the account will be debited for the appropriate charge. Families will be notified of account balances as outlined in Section III. Families may add money to students' lunch accounts by online payment or cash or check payments can be made at the school with the nutritional services facilitator or in the office.
- B. 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 BALANCES – NOTIFICATION**

- A. The school district 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 once the negative balance reaches \$2.00 and when an outstanding negative balance reaches \$-.01 Families will be notified by automated calling system.
- 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. The school district 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. The 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 \$100 not paid prior to the end of the school year, may be turned over to the director or director's designee 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. The school district 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. The school district may 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