

Adopted: July 26, 2017
Annual Review: _____
Revised: _____

Upsala Area Schools, ISD #487 – Policy 534
Orig. 2017

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. This policy will also establish consistent meal account procedures for the Upsala Area School District #487.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. The Upsala Area School District recognizes the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide breakfast and lunch for their children. Proper nutritional intake is essential for adequate learning to occur.
- B. It is the policy of the Upsala Area School District to offer breakfast and lunch. The Food Service Department strives to produce quality meals at a reasonable cost.

III. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. Students may purchase meals when funds have been deposited into their family/student account or by cash payment. Meal account payments are due on the first day of each month during the school year.
- B. If the school district 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 purchase a meal and the meal charge will be applied to the outstanding debt.
- D. The school district may provide an alternate meal that meets federal and state requirements to a student who does not have sufficient funds in the student's account or cannot pay cash for a meal. The school district will accommodate special dietary needs with respect to alternate meals. The cost of the alternative meal will be charged to the student's account or otherwise charged to the student.

- 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.
- F. Households may apply for Meal Benefits anytime during the school year. Those households with outstanding debt will be strongly encouraged to complete the application for Meal Benefits. Applications are delivered to all households in the school district prior to the school year and are included in enrollment packets. In addition, applications are available in the District Office and on the District website.

III. PROCEDURES FOR NOTIFYING FAMILIES OF ACCOUNT STATUS

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero. Parents/Guardians will be notified weekly when the household account has a balance of less than \$20. Notification will be made by email. In addition to this email, the District will follow up with letters and phone calls as necessary. If parents/guardians do not respond to these communications, the District administration will request a conference with the parents/guardians.
- B. If the household account is less than adequate to pay for meals, students will be allowed to purchase meals for cash, or charge the meal to the household account. The Upsala Area School District reserves the right to initiate collection procedures if the parent/guardian is unresponsive to emails, letters, phone calls, or other methods of communication. The Upsala Area School District will make every effort to work with families to manage their household meal accounts. *Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program.*
- C. Students will be offered the regularly served meals when the household meal account balance is negative. The Upsala Area School District is under no legal obligation to do so but believes that this practice is in the best interests of students.
- E. The District may request assistance from county Social Services for possible neglect if parents/guardians refuse to provide meals for their children and/or the above procedures are unsuccessful.

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 school district 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 \$50, not paid prior to *the end of the school year* will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in 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