



## Hamilton County Schools Meal Charge Administrative Procedure

Effective Date: July 1, 2017

Last Updated: September 19, 2019

As provided in SP 46-2016, all school food authorities (SFAs) operating the federal school meal programs (National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program) must have a written and clearly communicated meal charge administrative procedure in place no later than July 1, 2017. All SFAs must have an administrative procedure in place for children participating at the reduced price or paid meal rate who either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. SFAs are required to communicate this administrative procedure to families and school and/or district-level staff members as appropriate. SFAs should ensure the administrative procedure is communicated on an annual basis.

Families will have access to the meal charge administrative procedure via the District website under the School Nutrition section. Families of transfer students (during the year) will be directed to the same website for the meal charge procedure. Meal charge information is included in student handbooks and in the free and reduced meal application packet.

### **Local Charge Administrative Procedure Considerations**

#### **General**

Grades pre-K through 8 students are allowed to charge breakfast and lunch, receiving a reimbursable meal of their choice.

High school students in grades 9-12 are allowed to charge breakfast and lunch up to \$40, receiving a reimbursable meal of their choice.

Only one meal per meal service is permitted to be charged. No a la carte, second meals, or adult meals may be charged.

#### **Charge limits**

Students in Grades Pre-K through 8 have no charge limit.

Students in Grades 9-12 have a \$40 charge limit.

#### **Household Notification**

#### *Low balances over \$0.00*

Parents can monitor their student's balance with a free account at [www.mypaymentsplus.com](http://www.mypaymentsplus.com). Once registered, parents can receive notifications when their student's balance drops below an established amount.

#### *For any negative balance*

The parent of each student with a negative balance receives a weekly phone call and an email (if available through Power School, the student data base system). This continues throughout the school year.

SNP IT staff will send a detailed balance of each student with charges to the District Finance Department weekly for review.

#### *For negative balances over \$5.00*

Managers will print off charge notification letters weekly, listing the balance each child in the household has for negative balances of \$5.00 or more. This letter will also include the link to the free and reduced application, as well as the link to My Payments Plus to make payments.

For two consecutive weeks, managers send letters to each family. These letters are prepared and taken to the office for teachers to distribute to each student through their backpack.

After those first two letters are sent from the school level, escalating language letters are sent from the SNP Central Office to the parents.

The software is designed to alert the SNP IT staff if a manager fails to print these letters and in turn, the Supervisors, Assistant Director and the Director are notified of this lack. The Supervisors contact their managers as a follow-up and reminder to do so.

If the balance gets paid but new ones occur, the above process repeats itself.

#### *For negative balances over \$25*

For students with negative balances of \$25.00 or more, email notifications are sent to parents with instructions on completing the free and reduced application. This communication will include the link to the online free and reduced application, instructions for obtaining a paper application, and the student's account balance. Additionally, a paper free and reduced application will be mailed to the parent.

If an email address is not available, the parent will be notified by phone.

#### *For negative balances over \$50*

For students with negative balances of \$50.00 or more, a phone call is made to the parent with instructions for free and reduced application completion and information on the student's account balance.

### **Returned Checks**

When a check is written to the School Nutrition Department for a student meal account and returned by the bank for any reason the following procedures are followed.

Checks under \$100 are deposited on the student's account and payment is sought from the parent. Parents are sent a letter notifying them of the returned check and that they have 10 days to pay the amount of the original check.

During that 10-day period, the parents are called to remind them about the check.

Returned checks written on a closed bank account or for \$100 or greater are adjusted from the student's account. This is done as soon as this department is notified by the bank.

### **Delinquent Debt**

Delinquent debt is defined as overdue unpaid meal charges that are considered collectable, with efforts being made to collect them. Families that accumulate a delinquent debt are sent a letter from the Chief Business Officer stating that the school may withhold diplomas, certificates of progress or transcripts until restitution is made. Also, afterschool activities may be denied. Payment will be made to the cafeteria.

### **Repayment plans**

Each household may request a repayment plan that will include payment levels and due dates appropriate to a household's particular circumstances. Please contact the Finance Department for establishing a repayment plan.

### **Bad Debt**

Bad debt is determined to be uncollectable when further collection efforts for delinquent debt are deemed useless or too costly. Delinquent debt will be considered by School Nutrition as bad debt after June 30 of each school year.

Bad debts (debts which have been determined to be uncollectable), including losses (whether actual or estimated) arising from uncollectable accounts and other claims, are unallowable costs to the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA). Related collection costs, and related legal costs, arising from such debts after they have been determined to be uncollectable are also unallowable (2 CFR 200.426 of subpart E).

At the end of year, the amount of unpaid returned checks is declared as a bad debt and is added to the Unpaid Charges for the year, which is billed to Hamilton County Department of Education.

Bad debt must be written off as an operating loss by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each school fiscal year. The NSFSA resources may not be used to cover the costs related to the bad debt. The accumulated bad debt, which includes unpaid charges and unpaid returned checks, will be paid to the School Nutrition Program for the totals as of June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. Once delinquent meal charges are converted to bad debt, records relating to those charges are maintained in accordance with record retention requirements in 7 CFR 210.9(b)(17) and 7 CFR 210.15(b).

### **Free and Reduced Meals**

Families may apply for free or reduced meals by visiting [www.hamilton.schoollunchapp.com](http://www.hamilton.schoollunchapp.com). They may also find assistance with applying for free or reduced-price school meals by calling 423-498-7290.

### **Non-Discrimination Statement**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter 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;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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