

Owatonna Public Schools

MEAL CHARGE AND DEBT COLLECTION PROCEDURE

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to establish consistent district practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts and for the collection of unpaid meal debt. The procedure ensures that the school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF PROCEDURE

- A. The goal of Owatonna Public Schools Nutrition Services Department is to provide nutritious meals to students to promote healthy eating habits and enhance learning as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs.
- B. Families can apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits at any time during the school year by completing an online application, filling out a paper copy at the District Office, or by printing a copy from the school district's webpage. Families can reapply for meal benefits anytime during the school year if household income or family size changes. Families are financially responsible for all student purchases made prior to the official approval of their application.

III. PAYMENTS

Funds should be maintained in student meal accounts to minimize the possibility that a student is without money on any given day. All remaining funds in the student's meal account at the end of the school year will be carried over to the next school year. Payment options include the following:

- A. Pay online, and manage your student's account at www.mypaymentsplus.com. Make payments, view purchase history, view meal balances, set up automatic email reminders, or set up a payment "auto-replenish"
- B. By check (student's name must be written in memo line)
 - Elementary: Payment box in school office, or give payment to teacher
 - Middle School: Payment box outside of cafeteria, or hand payment to cashier
 - High School: Hand payment to cashier
- A. District Office, 515 W. Bridge St.
 - 24-hour secure payment box located on the east driveway
 - Pay in person with cash or check during normal business hours

IV. CHARGE PROCEDURE

The process below is followed if the student meal account has insufficient funds to pay for meals.

Full-Pay Student Eligibility

- Students should eat breakfast at home and bring a lunch from home when meal account balance is negative.
- Negative balances must be paid in full prior to purchasing a la carte items.
- Students cannot use anyone else's Personal Identification Number (PIN) for purchase of food items.
- Negative balance information may be sent to appropriate administrators including, but not limited to, Principals, Social Workers, Nutrition Services Director, Superintendent, and School Liaisons.

Free and Reduced-Price Student Eligibility

- Students with Free or Reduced-Price eligibility can receive a free breakfast and free lunch daily. (Note: all kindergarten students receive breakfast at no cost regardless of meal eligibility status)
- Students with a negative account balance are never allowed to charge a la carte items.
- Students cannot use anyone else's PIN for the purchase of food items.
- Negative balance information may be sent to appropriate administrators including, but not limited to, Principals, Social Workers, Nutrition Services Director, Superintendent, and School Liaisons.

V. NOTIFICATION OF ACCOUNT STATUS

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families using the following methods:

- Emails will be sent to parents when the balance reaches -\$10.00 or greater.
- Cashiers will provide a verbal notice at the point of sale when the balance is \$10.00 or less.
- A hand stamp will be offered to K-5 students when the balance is \$10.00 or less.
- Payment reminder slips are available at each cash register.
- Negative balance notices will be sent home with K-5 students weekly when their balance drops below \$0.00.
- Negative balance information will be sent to K-8 principals and social workers weekly, and principals or their designee may contact families regarding delinquent account(s).
- Phone calls may be made home to parents when the balance is -\$10.00 or greater.

VI. COLLECTION OF UNPAID MEAL DEBT

- A. The school district will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid meal charges.
 - Families may be encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their students.
 - Where appropriate, funds may be transferred between student accounts within the same household.
- 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. When the student meal account balance reaches -\$50.00, the following action will be taken: a formal letter will be sent to the household notifying them that the debt will be turned over to Advantage Collection Professionals, a third-party collection agency.

VII. SENIORS AND INACTIVE STUDENTS

- A. When a student graduates or leaves our district and has a remaining meal account balance of \$5.00 or greater, Nutrition Services will attempt to contact the family so that a refund can be issued or money transferred to another student.
- B. When a student graduates or leaves our district and has a remaining meal account balance of less than \$5.00, the remaining funds will be transferred to our Husky Angel Fund unless we are contacted by the student's family. The Husky Angel Fund is used to pay off student negative balances across the district.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.