

802.05 Free or Reduced Cost Meals Eligibility

Friday, August 11, 2023

FREE OR REDUCED COST MEALS ELIGIBILITY AND MEAL CHARGES

The district shall comply with all state and federal laws applying to providing free and reduced meals under the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and other related federal grant programs.

Free or Reduced Meals Eligibility

Families of students enrolled in the district who wish to qualify for free or reduced price meals may submit an application on or after July 1 for the current school year. If the financial situation of a household changes during the school year, they may submit a new application to become eligible. Applications are available at the Central Administrative Office of the school building.

Meal Charges

The written meal charge policy and guidelines shall be in place before the beginning of each school year and parents shall be advised of the available payment systems and meal prices. The district will encourage pre-payment of meal balances but the district must include a method for adding funds during the school day such as cash payments at the school office. A qualifying student with money to purchase a reduced price meal must be provided the meal; the district may not use that money for previously unpaid charges if the student intended to buy a meal that day.

All balances remaining in accounts shall carry over to the next month. Balances of households qualifying for free or reduced meals with funds remaining in the account at the end of the school year shall receive a refund. The district shall attempt to contact the household of all students transferring out or graduating from the district to return any unused funds remaining in the student's account. The district may set varying meal charge guidelines for students of different grade levels including charges relating to alternate meals, ala carte items and limits on charges that a

parent may set for a student's daily lunch expenditures.

The district must set written guidelines regarding the collection of delinquent meal charges such as the amount of delinquent meal charges which initiate an established collection process, providing notice to households of those students and carrying out appropriate follow-up. Unpaid meal charges are classified as "delinquent debt" and remain on the food service accounting documents until they are collected or written off as uncollectible.

Guidelines must also cover how the district will handle situations where children eligible for reduced price meals do not have money in their accounts to cover the cost of their meal at the time of service. Households must be notified of all payment methods used by the district, including any fees. At least one payment method must be free of charge. The district cannot solely require the use of an online payment system; another option must be available.