

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 196  
Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools  
*Educating our students to reach their full potential*

Series Number 710.2.2AR Adopted June 2017 Revised April 2018

Title Unpaid Meal Charges

1. **Purpose** - The purpose of this regulation is to establish consistent district practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts and the collection of unpaid meal debt.
2. **General Statement of Policy**
  - 2.1 District 196's goal 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 program and eliminate stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges.
  - 2.2 District 196 offers breakfast and/or lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
  - 2.3 Households may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. The online application and instructions for how to apply are available on the District 196 website year-round. The free/reduced-price meal application is also available by request from the District 196 Food and Nutrition Services Department. District 196 distributes detailed instructions on how to apply online during the summer. If a household does not qualify for free/reduced price meal benefits, it may reapply for meal benefits anytime during the school year if it experiences a decrease in household income, an increase in the size of the household, experiences unemployment, has a newly placed foster child or is approved for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP," formerly Food Stamps), the Minnesota Family Investment Program ("MFIP") or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations ("FDPIR") benefits.
  - 2.4 A summary of this regulation will be given to the households of enrolled students on an annual basis.
3. **Charge Policy**
  - 3.1 Parents or guardians are responsible for all meal purchases made by their child unless they qualify for free/reduced-price meals. Responsibility for purchases includes charges that occur prior to the official date of determination of eligibility for free/reduced price meals. Unpaid meal charges place a financial burden on the District 196 budget.
  - 3.2 Free/reduced price meal benefits do not include ala carte items and/or milk purchased separately. Students with an overdrawn account are not allowed to charge ala carte items.
  - 3.3 Meals may be paid for online by making electronic deposits to a student's school meal account through the District 196 electronic payment system, or payments may be sent to school with the student.
  - 3.4 Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals will always be served a regular school meal regardless of unpaid school meal accounts.
  - 3.5 When a student eligible for paid meals has "cash in hand" to pay for a meal, the student will be served a meal regardless of unpaid school meal accounts. The "cash in hand" will not be applied towards past due balances.
  - 3.6 A regular school meal will not be taken away from a student with an overdrawn account.

4. **Notification of Account Status and Collection of Unpaid Meal Debt**– The Food & Nutrition Services Department will work proactively with parents/guardians to keep them informed of their students’ balances. Households will be made aware of school meal account balances and attempted collection will occur in the following manner:
  - 4.1 Households can check their student’s school meal account balance using the District 196 electronic payment system via the student portal or by contacting the Food & Nutrition Services Department for account balances. Parents may elect to set “low balance” school meal account alerts to their email account when using the District 196 electronic payment system.
  - 4.2 When a student has a low or negative balance, notification to the student’s parent or guardian and subsequent debt collection efforts will occur as follows:
    - 4.2.1 Once a student’s school meal account balance reaches a balance of between one remaining meal and a negative balance of five remaining meals, the Food and Nutrition Services Manager (“FNSM”) will attempt to make contact with the parent or guardian informing them that payment is required.
    - 4.2.2 At least once a week following attempted contact, the FNSM in an elementary school will print out low balance/negative balance slips to be discreetly sent home in the elementary school student’s backpack.
    - 4.2.3 If payment has not been made after the initial contact in section 4.2.1, and the charge of an additional three meals is added to the deficit, the FNSM manager will inform the school principal. The school principal or designee will attempt to contact the parents/guardians about the deficit and to determine if the family needs assistance completing a free/reduced price meal application.
    - 4.2.4 Once a student’s school meal account is overdrawn by the cost of eight meals the building principal or designee will send a letter home to the parent/guardian requesting payment.
    - 4.2.5 If no payment is made following the exhaustion of collection efforts, District 196 may refer the matter to a collection agency.
  - 4.3 Reminders for payment of outstanding balances on student school meal accounts will be done with parents or guardians. Collection of unpaid meal debt will be done in a manner that does not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school meal program.

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**References:** -Minnesota Statute 124D.111, subd. 4, Lunch Aid; Food Service Accounting  
-USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016