



LPS Meal Charge Standard Procedure

Purpose

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) has determined children and their families must be informed about how children who pay full-price (paid rate) or reduced-price for a reimbursable meal are impacted by having insufficient funds on hand or in their account to purchase a meal. There is no Federal regulation that requires school districts to serve meals to a child who does not have sufficient funds to purchase one; however, LPS has developed a practice to address this issue, as we feel it is important to ensure we feed all kids, every day, in an equitable manner. Meal charge privileges are at the discretion of the district and evaluated on an annual basis.

Scope

The following policies are to be utilized when handling unpaid meal account balances, the collections of delinquent meal payments and uncollectible delinquent debt or bad debt.

****These policies are specifically targeting student accounts. Adult accounts at no time are allowed to charge into the negative. All adult meals, including employees of the district, are required to be paid for in full at the time of purchase. If an adult does not have money for their meal, they will not be allowed to take the meal. Taking a meal, or any food items, without purchase will be seen as theft from the Nutrition Service Department.**

UNPAID MEAL ACCOUNTS

Definitions

- REIMBURSABLE MEALS – Meals that are eligible for Federal Reimbursement.
- CHARGED MEALS – Any reimbursable meal purchased that takes the account balance below \$0.00.
- ALTERNATIVE MEALS – A meal provided at no cost to students when funds are not available to cover the cost of the planned reimbursable meal.
- A LA CARTE – Single items offered in addition to or separate from the reimbursable meal such as: bottled beverages, milk, extra entrees, snack items, etc.
- NSFSA – Nonprofit School Food Service Account

Charge Allowances - All Grades

Students may charge reimbursable meals for a limited time.

- Families are expected to keep student meal account(s) current.
- Charged meals are tracked in the student's meal account within the point of sale system.
- Students are not allowed to purchase a la carte items (bottled beverages, milk, extra entrees, snack items, etc.) when their account is in the negative, even with cash in hand.
- Communication will be sent to all families once per week with negative balances until the balance is cleared up

Prevention and Communication of Low/Insufficient Funds

There are a number of measures in place for all schools to prevent students and families from experiencing negative meal account balances:

- Free & Reduced-price Meal Application- Families are encouraged to complete the application for meal benefits annually. The form may be accessed through the district's website or printed copies are available at every school and from the Food & Nutrition Services Office located at 5776 South Crocker Street, Littleton, CO 80120.
- Carry Over Statuses – All students with a prior year “Free” or “Reduced” status keep their status for 30 school days into the new school year, allowing time to re-submit a new school year application.
- Verbal Reminders – Kitchen staff will offer discrete, verbal reminders a few days before the student account balance will run out.
- Low Balance Letters – Low balance letters are provided weekly to families of elementary students.
- Auto Calls- The point of sale software generates automatic calls to families with students whose account balances are less than \$0.00. These calls occur two times per week until the account balance is increased above the designated amount.
 - Families can update their contact information through the parent portal in Infinite Campus.
 - Families can turn off notifications by contacting Nutrition Services. **When this is done it also turns off emergency notification to families from the district.
- Auto Emails – Negative Balance Emails are sent at the end of every week to families with balances at or below \$15.00. A link to our free and reduced application and payment system will be in the body of the email.
- MySchoolBucks – Food and Nutrition Services offers an online system for families to check balances and make payments.
 - Low balance reminders can be set up within MySchoolBucks
 - Automatic Payments can be set up within MySchoolBucks
- Contact Your School – Families can contact the school kitchen directly to request to check their balance.
- Bring Payment – Students may purchase a reimbursable meal with cash or check at the time the meal is served. Families may send in funds (cash or check) to add money to the student's meal account.

- Additional Action – If behavior patterns develop with students who consistently do not have money for meals, the Kitchen Manager should discuss this with the Principal, Counselor, student or family to determine the best solution for the student.

COLLECTIONS OF DELINQUENT MEAL PAYMENTS

Delinquent Debt – As defined by USDA, delinquent debt includes unpaid meal charges that are considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect them. Delinquent debt, or a negative balance, remains on the accounting documents (accounts receivable) until it is either collected or is determined to be uncollectible and written off. LPS considers student accounts with negative balances to be in delinquent status.

- During the time a student has a negative balance or delinquent debt no a la carte purchases are allowed, even with cash in hand.
- Once the account is brought to a positive balance and has sufficient funds to cover cost of a la carte, students may resume purchases. At no time should account go below zero (\$0.00) to purchase an a la carte items.)

UNCOLLECTIBLE DELINQUENT DEBT OR BAD DEBT

Bad Debt – Delinquent debts which have been determined to be uncollectible will be reclassified as “bad debt”. LPS considers student accounts with uncollectible delinquent balances to be “bad debt” when collection efforts have been unsuccessful for twelve (12) months after a student account becomes inactive in the district. Graduating senior accounts become bad debt as of the last day of May following graduation. Repayment of “bad debt” is an unallowable expense for the NSFSA; therefore, payment for this bad debt balance must come from other sources such as:

- The district’s general fund
- Special funding from state or local governments
- Donations

DONATIONS

Regardless of their source, monies received through NS as donations to pay off negative meal balances will be deposited into a district account set up specifically for meal account donations. Donations will be distributed to student accounts district-wide on an annual basis to ensure equity for all families and schools.

All donations will be deposited and distributed per the [Nutrition Services Donation Procedure](#)

REFUNDS, CLOSED OR “INACTIVE ACCOUNTS”

Families may request a refund of their student(s) meal account(s) at any time using our refund request process. Full details related to inactive accounts or closed accounts can be found in our [LPS Nutrition Services Inactive Accounts Refund Standard Practice](#)