

Meal Charge Policy

Federal Requirement

The purpose of this policy is to address the need for SFAs participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) to institute and clearly communicate a meal charge policy, which would include, if applicable, the availability of alternate meals. Because all students in participating schools may receive reimbursable school meals, all SFAs must have a policy in place for children who are participating at the reduced-price or paid rate, but either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. Such a policy ensures that school food service professionals, school administrators, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations in these situations.

You can find more information about this USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requirement on the [USDA Unpaid Meal Charges website](http://www.fns.usda.gov/meal-charges).

This policy will establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the school division. The goals of this policy are:

- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts
- To support positive situations with division staff, division business policies, student and parent/guardian to the maximum extent possible
- To establish policies that are age appropriate
- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges.

State Requirement

The policy must contain the following state requirements from the passage of House Bill 50 and 2013, Senate Bill 840, and the newest House Bill 583. The meal charge policy must contain policies that:

1. *Prohibit school board employees from requiring a student who cannot pay for a meal at school or who owes a school meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for such meals or wear a wristband or hand stamp; and*
2. *Require school board employees to direct any communication relating to a school meal debt to the student's parent. Such policy may permit such communication to be made by a letter addressed to the parent to be sent home with the student.*
3. *Prohibit the school board from filing a lawsuit against a student or the student's parent because the student cannot pay for a meal at school or owes a school meal debt.*
4. *Prohibit the school board or any school board employee from denying a student the opportunity to participate in any extracurricular school activity because the student cannot pay for a meal at school or owes a school meal debt.*

Policy Development

All SFAs must develop a written policy for children eligible for reduced-price or full-price meals that do not have money to pay for meals at the time of service. The policy must contain the following unless otherwise noted:

1. Students who qualify for free meals will not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance on their cafeteria account.
2. Students who have money to pay for a reduced-price or full price meal at the time of service must be provided a meal. If the student intended to use the money for that day's meal, the SFA will not use the money to repay a negative balance or other unpaid meal charge debt.
3. Students will not be made to work for their meal or to work to settle any unpaid meal charges. In addition, students will not be labeled with a hand stamp, sticker, wristband, or identified in any other way if they cannot pay for a meal or have an unpaid meal charge.
4. Students are allowed to charge all meals to their lunch account.
5. Students who charge will receive a reimbursable meal.

Communicating the Policy

The charge policy must be communicated to all students and households by the beginning of the school year. SFAs must document methods of communicating the policy to households and training of staff responsible for policy enforcement. The meal charge policy must also direct any communication of a student's debt directly to the parent or guardian. Schools may no longer communicate this information directly to the student. A letter addressed to the parent and sent home with the student is an acceptable form of communication.

1. The written meal charge policy will be communicated to the household by visiting the school website at: <https://www.easternmennonite.org/about/dining-hall/>
2. School Nutrition Program (SNP) staff will receive training on meal charge policy and a record of the training will be maintained as part of the professional development portfolio.
3. Documentation of the communication and training plan will be maintained for the Federal Program Administrative Review.

Notification to the Household of Low or Negative Balance in Student Cafeteria Account

1. Parents/Guardians will receive 2 emails per month from their FACTS account. The first will be in the middle of each month stating the anticipated meal charges for the month. The second email will be an invoice stating that meal charges were withdrawn from the bank account connected to their FACTS account.
2. The persons responsible for managing unpaid meal charges are:
 1. Chris Eberly from EMS's business office will contact households.

Collection of Delinquent Meal Charge Debt

The charge policy must contain how the school division will collect delinquent meal charge debt. **Delinquent debt is allowable in the School Nutrition Program (SNP) and may be carried over to one successive school year.** Bad debt is defined as delinquent debt that is deemed uncollectible at the end of the school year. Bad debt is unallowable in the SNP

and cannot be carried over to the next school year. Funds resulting from bad debt cannot be recovered using SNP funds and must be offset by non-federal sources. The meal charge policy must also direct any communication of a student's debt directly to the parent or guardian. Schools may no longer communicate this information directly to the student. A letter addressed to the parent and sent home with the student is an acceptable form of communication. The policy must also state that school boards cannot file a lawsuit against a student or the student's parent because the student cannot pay for a meal at school or owes a school meal debt.

1. Parents will be notified directly if students have an outstanding debt. Parents will receive an email from FACTS and may also be contacted by the Business Office
2. Efforts to collect delinquent and/or bad debt will be handled by:
 - a. Send First and Second Letters
 - b. Phone calls
 - c. Notice of Collections

Assistance to Households

The charge policy must contain a way for parents and administrators to receive assistance if needed.

1. Households with questions or needing assistance may contact the school office where their student attends or the School Nutrition Program office at:
Karla Tierney. dininghall@emhs.net 540-236-6008
Or
Chris Eberly. eberlyc@emhs.net 540-236-6035
2. Household will receive a Notification stating collection procedures have begun.