

**School District Management
Student Meal Account Balances**

The School District provides the opportunity to purchase breakfast and lunch from the school cafeteria. The Food Service Department maintains a computerized point of sale/service system to track all purchases and deposits made on behalf of students within the School District. The Food Service Department is expected to maintain financial independence from the general fund school budget; therefore, it is important that all parents/guardians keep their student's accounts current and not incur any debt.

Terminology

Delinquent Debt: Unpaid meal charges are considered "delinquent debt" when payment is overdue as defined by State or local policies. The debt is classified as delinquent if it is considered collectable and efforts are being made to collect it. **Unpaid meal charges may be carried over at the end of the school year (i.e., beyond June 30) as a delinquent debt and collection efforts may continue into the new school year.**

Bad debt: When collection efforts for delinquent debt are unsuccessful or too costly, the debt must be reclassified as "bad debt." Federal Regulations at 2 CFR 200.426 define bad debts as "debts which have been determined to be uncollectible..."

Funding Student Account

Funds may be deposited into the student's account by cash, check or an online payment. Cash or checks made out to Goffstown Food Service may be sent to the student's school or mailed to Goffstown Food Service, 27 Wallace Road, Goffstown NH 03045. The District utilizes the services of an on-line payment system with a link found on the Food Service webpage.

The use of checks or on-line payments are encouraged as each provides a record. Parents/guardians are responsible for any fees charged by the on-line service. In accordance with USDA guidance SP 02-2015, there will be no processing fee for deposits to a student's meal account made by cash or check.

Bank fees incurred on any check returned for insufficient funds will be charged to the parent/guardian. A fee of \$25.00 will also be charged to parents/guardians for each check returned by the bank. In accordance with NH RSA 358-C:5, notice of the fee charged for a check that is returned shall be disclosed in telephone conversations and/or included in any letter sent to a parent/guardian seeking payment because the student meal account has an outstanding negative balance.

Parent/Guardian Restrictions on Use of Student Meal Account

Parents/guardians who fund a meal account for their students are responsible for setting with their student any restrictions to place on use of the account. Unless restricted by the parents/guardians or school, a student may purchase a la carte items in addition to the regular meal choices. Students will not be allowed to charge a la carte items without available funds in their account. Some students purchase more than one meal at one sitting. Setting and ensuring compliance with limitations on the use of the student's meal account afford families an opportunity to develop their student's understanding of the responsible use of credit and debit accounts which will benefit the student throughout life. Parents/guardians must monitor the student's use of the meal account to ensure that a sufficient balance is available at all times for their student to charge meals.

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Balance Statements

The District's on-line payment system allows parents/guardians to check their student's balance at any time and setup low balance reminder emails for the lunch account. The District will work proactively with parents/guardians to maintain a positive balance in their student's meal account. "Low-balance" emails will be sent twice a week when accounts have \$15.00 or less left to spend.

Overdue (Negative Balance) Accounts

The District recognizes that unexpected financial hardships occur and will work with parents/guardians in this circumstance to limit the amount of accumulated debt. To do so, it is essential that parents/guardians respond to emails, phone calls or letters and cooperate with District staff efforts. The District's proactive approach is intended to help ensure students have healthy meals and that parents/guardians do not accumulate significant debt to the school meal program.

Parents/guardians will be notified by email when the account is overdue. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to make a payment to bring the account current.

Additionally, when payment has not been received for the negative accounts of \$10.00 or more, the Food Service Department will make phone calls and/or send emails to parents/guardians to advise them to replenish the student's account.

If the account continues to accumulate debt to negative \$30.00 or more and the parents/guardians does not respond to emails and/or phone calls, the District will send a letter to the parents/guardians directing them to have their student bring meals from home and cease utilizing the school meal program. If the student continues to use the school meal program, a second letter will be sent to the parents/guardians using certified mail return requested.

Free or Reduced-Price Meals

The District participates in the federally supported program to provide free or reduced price meals to students from families whose economic circumstances make paying for meals difficult. Income guidelines for eligibility are based on family size and are updated each year by the USDA. The District will ensure that parents/guardians are informed of the eligibility requirements and application procedures for free or reduced cost meals as well as the requirements of this policy.

Parents/guardians shall be provided with a copy of this policy and an application for free or reduced cost meals annually at the start of the school year. Upon enrollment of a transfer student during the school year, the front office has extra packets to provide to parents/guardians when enrolling. The communication explaining the availability of free or reduced price meals shall include all elements required by Federal Regulation, 7 C.F.R. 245.5. Each packet identifies a member of the District staff with contact information, who is available to answer questions or assist parents/guardians with applying for free or reduced price meals.

As required by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and USDA Guidance, parents/guardians with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) will be provided with information on this policy and the free and reduced price meal program in a language the parents/guardians can understand. The District will utilize USDA and community

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resources to fulfill this requirement. This policy and links to application materials for the free or reduced price meal program will be posted on the school web site and made available to parents/guardians at each school. The District will enroll students found to be categorically eligible by the State of New Hampshire into the free and reduced meal program. When eligibility is established, the District will apply the earliest effective date permitted by federal and state law.

The District may provide a copy of this policy and application materials for free or reduced price meals to the Goffstown Food Pantry who may have contact with parents/guardians who are confronting layoffs or other financial hardship.

Students Without Cash in Hand or A Positive Account Balance

Regardless of whether a student has money to pay for a meal or has a negative balance in the meal account, a student requesting a meal shall be provided with a meal from among the choices available to all students. The only exception will be when the student's parents/guardians have provided the District with specific written direction that the student not be provided with a school lunch program meal, the student has a meal sent from home, or otherwise has access to an appropriate meal. Under no circumstances will a student's selected meal be thrown away because of the status of the student's meal account.

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide their student with a meal from home or to pay for school prepared meals. Therefore, the District's Policy is to direct communications to parents/guardians about student meal debt. When parents/guardians chose to provide meals sent from home, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to explain to their student the necessity of the student not using the school meal program.

Initial efforts to contact parents/guardians will be by e-mail first, phone call second. However, if those efforts are unsuccessful, letters to parents/guardians will be sent via USPS. When the District has not received a response from parents/guardians or parents/guardians do not cooperate in resolving negative student meal account balances and the student continues to use the school meal program, the school principal or their designee(s) may communicate directly with the parents/guardians on the matter. Resolution of the problem should seek to ensure the student has ongoing access to an appropriate meal.

Unresolved Debt

If the District determines with the best available information, that the parents/guardians are able to pay the expense of the student's meals and the parents/guardians decline to cooperate with resolving the debt in a timely manner, the District shall send a letter to the parents/guardians directing them to have their student bring meals from home and cease utilizing the school meal program. If the student continues to use the school meal program, a second letter shall be sent to the parents/guardians using certified mail, return requested.

If parents/guardians continue to fail to provide the student with a meal sent from home, continue to fail to provide funds for their student to use the school lunch program, continue to refuse to cooperate with reasonable requests by the District staff to address the overdue debt and the parent is believed to have the ability to pay, the Superintendent or their designee may pursue payment through civil legal action, including filing a claim in small claims court pursuant to RSA Chapter 503. The Superintendent or their

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designee is delegated authority to assess the likelihood that civil action will lead to payment, the resources required to pursue collection and to pursue such action only when doing so is in the best interest of the District.

The Superintendent or their designee will try to identify non-profit charities that are willing to contribute funds to the District to assist in keeping a positive balance in the meal account of students whose parents/guardians do not qualify for free meals and who due to financial hardship are unable to consistently keep the student meal account in a positive balance.

When a student is graduating high school or transferring out of the District, uncollected debt in student meal accounts must, as a last resort to fulfill federal requirements, be paid to the school meal program from other District funds. The parents/guardians' debt for unpaid meal charges shall be owed to the District.

Applying the policy set forth above, the Superintendent shall determine if further collection efforts are in the best interest of the District. Any payments collected on debt that has been offset with District funds, shall be credited to the District. All debt collection efforts shall comply with RSA Chapter 358-C, New Hampshire's Unfair, Deceptive or Unreasonable Collection Practices Act.

Positive Balances Upon Graduation/Transfer or Withdrawal

There are situations in which students possess positive balances in their food service account either at the end of high school or because of leaving the School District. The School District Food Service Director will notify those account holders in late May of each school year of positive balances so they may be exhausted prior to the end of the school year or transferred to a sibling. Graduated students or students who have left the District, have until October 1st of the following school year to request a reimbursement. After October 1st any account balances under \$10.00 of graduated students or other students who have left the District, will be retained by the Food Service Fund. All balances of \$10.00 or more will be handled in accordance with the NH Abandoned Property Law- NH RSA 471-C.

Staff Enforcement of Policy/Training

A copy of this policy and refresher training shall be provided annually to all food service and school staff responsible for serving student meals or enforcing this Policy. New staff with these responsibilities shall be provided with a written copy of the policy and training on the policy during their initial training or orientation. In accordance with federal requirements, a record shall be maintained documenting that new staff receive the policy and training. The record must also document that all applicable staff receive a copy of the policy and refresher training annually.

Students with Special Dietary Needs

Nothing in this policy prohibits providing an appropriate meal to a student with special dietary needs (such as, but not limited to, diabetes) provided these needs have been documented by the completion of a Special Meals prescription. The Special Meals prescription form can be requested from the Food Service Department or found on the food service webpage.

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Nondiscrimination

It is the District's policy that in operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, age or disability. 7C.F.R. 245.5(a)(1)(viii). Students will not be denied meals due to the existence of other unpaid charges at the school or for disciplinary reasons.

Assessment for Neglect Reporting

If a student who has been determined to be ineligible for free or reduced cost meals or whose parents/guardians have refused to cooperate with filing an application for free or reduced cost meals, is consistently not provided with meals, either through a meal sent from home or the payment for a meal through the school meal program, the Food Service Department and Principal will assess whether a report of child neglect is warranted to the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division for Children, Youth, & Families, as required by RSA 169-C:29-31

Complaints

To file a program complaint of discrimination with the USDA, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866)-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
- (2) Fax: (202)-690-7422; or
- (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This District is an equal opportunity provider.

Legal References: 7CFR 15 – Non-Discrimination

Proposed: 09/17/2012
Adopted: 11/05/2012
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