

**Diocese of Cleveland
Nutrition Services
Meal Charge Policy - Elementary**

I. Purpose

The Nutrition Services Department recognizes that on occasion, students may forget to bring a meal or money to school. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program, and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

The intent of this policy is to establish uniform meal charge procedures throughout the schools. While the USDA Child Nutrition Program does not require that students who pay for regular priced meals be served a meal without payment, the Nutrition Services Department provides this policy as a courtesy to those students, in the event they have not prepaid for a meal and forget their lunch or lunch money.

II. Scope of Responsibility

Cafeteria Manager/School Administration:

1. Responsible for maintaining record of meal orders and charges.
2. Encourage parent/guardian to complete a Free or Reduced price Meal Application to obtain meal benefits and avoid unpaid meal balances.
3. Notify students/parents/guardians of outstanding balances by email, phone or letter sent home with student.

Parent/Guardian:

1. Order/pay for meals in advance or at time of serving.
2. Complete a Free or Reduced price Meal Application to obtain meal benefits and avoid unpaid meal balances.
3. Contact Cafeteria Manager/School Administration to resolve any issue with your child's ordering or unpaid balances.

III. Policy and Procedure

Nutrition Services is committed to providing meals to students who choose to participate in the program. However, unpaid charges place a large financial burden on the school and there is a responsibility on the part of students and parents to satisfy all financial obligations to the lunch program. The following policy is in place if a student has not prepaid for a meal and is unable to provide payment at the time of service:

1. The student will receive a reimbursable meal. The meal may not necessarily be the meal as identified on the menu for the day. Payment is expected to be received the next day. In any case, a student may not "charge" more than a maximum of three (3) reimbursable meals. If the maximum number of meals is charged and the debt is not promptly paid, the student will receive donated alternate food items until the balance is paid in full.
2. If an alternate meal is served that meets the federal meal guidelines, it will be claimed for reimbursement.

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3. If unpaid meal charges exist, the student may no longer purchase A la Carte items until the balance has been paid in full. A la Carte items may never be charged.
4. The Cafeteria Manager/School Administration will coordinate communications with the student and parent/guardian via phone, email or correspondence sent home with the student whenever an unpaid balance has not been resolved.
5. If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration will investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed, including the potential refusal of charged meals. If financial hardship exists, parents and families are encouraged to apply for free or reduced price lunches.
6. Notice of this policy shall be provided to parent(s)/guardian(s) on an annual basis.