

Jeffco Procedure for Meal Charges, Alternative Meals, Delinquent Debt

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 require school districts to serve meals to a child who does not have sufficient funds to purchase one; however, Jeffco 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 uncollectable delinquent debt or bad debt.

UNPAID MEAL ACCOUNTS

Definitions

- Reimbursable Meal – Meals that are eligible for Federal Reimbursement.
- Charged Meal – Any reimbursable meal purchased that takes the account balance below \$0.00.
- Alternative Meal – 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.
- NSFS – Nonprofit School Food Service Account

Charge Allowances - Grades PreK-5th

Charged meals are allowed up to a negative \$8.55 balance, the value of three lunch meals.

- Charged meals are directly charged to 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.
- Charging privileges are suspended beginning the first Friday in May through the end of school year so that accounts can be brought current.

Charge Allowances Grades 6th-12th

Meal charges are not allowed in grades 6th-12th.

- 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.

ALTERNATE SACK LUNCH MEALS GRADES PREK-12TH

An alternate sack lunch meal is offered at no cost when a student's account cannot cover the cost of their meal:

- A maximum of 10 alternate sack lunches will be offered.
- An alternate sack lunch meal consists of a sandwich, vegetable, fruit and milk.
- There are no alternate breakfast meals offered.

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 809 Quail Street, Building 1, Lakewood, CO 80215.
- Carry Over Statuses – All students with a prior year “Free” or “Reduced” status keeps their status for 30 school days into the new school year, allowing time to resubmit 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 emailed weekly to families of elementary students.
- Auto Calls- The point of sale software generates automatic calls to families with students whose account balances with less than the designated amount below. These calls occur two times per week until the account balance is increased above the designated amount.
 - Students with an exact balance of \$0.00 will not receive an auto call. Generally, these students are inactive or do not dine with us.
 - Families of students with full-price paid benefits will be contacted when balance falls to \$5.00 or below.
 - Families of students with reduced-price meal benefits will be contacted when balance falls to \$2.00 or below.
 - Families can have this turned off by contacting Nutrition Services.
- MyPaymentsPlus – Food and Nutrition Services offers an online system for families to check balances and make payments.
- 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 uncollectable and written off. Jeffco 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 balance is brought to zero (\$0.00) a la carte purchases may resume.

UNCOLLECTABLE DELINQUENT DEBT OR BAD DEBT

Bad Debt – Delinquent debts which have been determined to be uncollectable will be reclassified as “bad debt”. Jeffco considers student accounts with uncollectable delinquent balances to be “bad debt” when collection efforts have been unsuccessful for twelve (12) months after a student leaves the district or graduates. 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:

- Other non-federal sources
- The district’s general fund
- Special funding from state or local governments
- Donations

Donations

- Regardless of their source, monies received through FNS 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.

REFUNDS

Families may request a refund of their student(s) meal account(s) at any time using the refund request process. If a refund request is not received, families will be given a refund of their student(s) meal account(s) twelve (12) months after the student leaves the district or graduates. These refunds will be issued annually.