

MEAL CHARGE AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT OF STUDENTS

I. PURPOSE

The goal of the Corning-Painted Post Food Service Program is to provide student access to nutritious no-cost or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a student whose parent(s)/guardian(s) has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent(s)/guardian(s) does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our 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 to safeguard that the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the Corning-Painted Post Food Service Program in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and after school snack meals only. The Corning-Painted Post Food Service Program provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals such as a la carte items, including milk, adult meals, etc., is expressly prohibited.

II. POLICY

- **Free Meal Benefit** - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items, including milk or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.
- **Reduced Meal Benefit** - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice at no charge and lunch of their choice at no charge each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items, including milk or other similar items must be paid for/prepaid.
- **Full Pay Students** - Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items, including milk, or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

MEAL CHARGE AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT OF STUDENTS

ONGOING STAFF TRAINING:

- Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the NYSED Webinar or the school's training program.
- Staff training includes ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

PARENT NOTIFICATION:

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted and has accrued meal charges within 5 days of the charge and then every 5 days thereafter.

PARENT OUTREACH:

- Staff will communicate with parent(s)/guardian(s) with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.
- School staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parent(s)/guardian(s) to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- School staff will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) to offer appropriate assistance with completion of the meal application to determine if there are issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds.

MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

- School will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student in the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- Students who incur meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.
- Schools will not take back a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous meal charges.
- Schools will not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- Schools will deal directly with parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding unpaid school meal fees.
- Ala carte, including milk, or extra items will be removed from the tray to prevent charges.

MEAL CHARGE AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT OF STUDENTS**ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:**

- School staff will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload at least monthly to maximize free eligibility.
- School staff will provide parent(s)/guardian(s) with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet.
- Schools using the electronic meal application will provide an explanation of the process in the school enrollment packet and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost.
- Schools will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.
- Schools will use administrative prerogative judiciously, only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the parent(s)/guardian(s) only with available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.
- Schools will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students.

Student(s)/Parent(s)/Guardian(s) may pay for meals in advance via www.corningareaschools.com then select Food Services or with a check payable to Corning-Painted Post Food Service Program. Further, details are available on our webpage at www.corningareaschools.com then select Food Services. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

REFUNDS FOR WITHDRAWN AND OR GRADUATING STUDENTS:

A written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer to a sibling's account with a written request.

UNCLAIMED FUNDS:

Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Corning-Painted Food Service Program.

Ref: New York Education Law §908
NYSED Office of Child Nutrition Memo, June 8, 2018
Revised-NYS Legislation: Prohibition Against Meal Shaming, Paula Tyner-Doyle, Coordinator

Adopted: June 20, 2018
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