



Meal Charge and Prohibition against Meal Shaming Policy

I. Purpose

The goal of *St. Joseph School* is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. The purpose of this policy is to insure 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 ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout *St. Joseph School* in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school lunch only. St. Joseph School 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 (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

II. Policy

Free Meal Benefit - **Free eligible students** will be allowed to receive a free lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid for.

Reduced Meal Benefit - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a lunch of their choice for \$.25 each day. A student will be allowed to charge a maximum of 3 meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. 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 or other similar items must be paid for at the time of purchase.

Full Pay Students - Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. A student will be allowed to charge a maximum of 3 meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. 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 or other similar items must be paid for at the time of purchase.

Reminder: Parents/Guardians are responsible for ALL lunch charges.

All charges have to be paid in full by June 15th of each school year. If charges are not paid in full by June 15th, they will be added to next school year's tuition statement.

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:

- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's lunch ticket is exhausted within one day and then every two days/week thereafter.
- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student has accrued meal charges within one day of the charge and then every two days/week thereafter.

PARENT OUTREACH:

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians 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 parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- School staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of the meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

- School staff will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on 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 throw away 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 pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

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 parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet.

- Schools using 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/guardian 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.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance with a check payable to *Notre Dame Nutritional Services*. Lunch tickets should be purchased regularly 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 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 must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of *Notre Dame High School Food Service Program*.

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(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) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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