

# Unpaid Meal Charge and Debt Collection Procedure

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent district practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts and the collection of unpaid meal debt.

## General Statement of Policy

1. Discovery Public School of Faribault's goal is to provide nutritious meals to students to promote healthy eating habits and enhance learning as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Breakfast and Lunch program and eliminate stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges.
2. It is the policy of Discovery Public School of Faribault to offer Breakfast and Lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
3. Family Lunch Account payments can be made in the school office during normal school hours with either cash or personal check. A check can also be mailed to: Discovery Public School of Faribault, Attn: Office Manager, 126 – 8<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Faribault, MN 55021.
4. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. The Application for Educational Benefits is distributed to all families in the district prior to the student's first day of classes. In addition, the Application for Educational Benefits is available during normal school hours in the school office or on-line via the parent portal. If household income or size changes, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.
5. Discovery Public School of Faribault will maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student.

## Charge Policy

1. If the student or family account has insufficient funds to pay for breakfast and/or lunch meals, Discovery Public School of Faribault will allow the student to continue charging on their account, up to a negative \$30.00 balance, or until the household has had sufficient time to deposit money into their Family account. The Office Manager will also contact families via the JMC Family Message Portal to encourage payment or suggest an Application for Educational Benefits be filled out and returned.
2. Once staff have placed a meal on a tray or otherwise served the meal to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.
3. Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals will always be served a meal regardless of unpaid food service accounts.
4. When a student eligible for PAID meals has “cash in hand” to pay for a meal, the student will be served a meal regardless of unpaid foodservice accounts. The “cash in hand” will not be applied towards past due balances.
5. Alternate meals may not be provided to students as a result of school lunch debt. Providing an alternate meal not on the scheduled menu violates a Minnesota law (Minn. Stat. § 124D.111) that requires respectful treatment of students regarding school lunch debt.

## Notification of Account Status

1. Any reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any child participating in the school lunch program, including but not limited to dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, providing an alternate meal, announcing or listing students' names publicly, or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.
2. Families can check their student's meal account balances via their JMC Family Portal any time day or night, or they may also call the School Office during normal Office Hours.
3. The Food Service Department will send emails twice a month to all families with a negative balance in their Family Lunch Accounts via the JMC Message System, via email, text message, or phone call. If contact is not able to be made, a letter will be mailed. Families will be encouraged to complete the Application for Educational Benefits if needed. Notification methods may be different depending on the individual circumstances, but students at Discovery public School will not go hungry. Every attempt will be made to assist families in need.

## Collection of Unpaid Meal Debt

When the student meal balance is in the negative, the following collection actions will be taken for all grade levels:

Discovery Public School of Faribault will not utilize collection agency services to collect unpaid school meal debt.

- a. The Office Manager will contact the household to request payment.
- b. The Office Manager will contact the School Director if no payment is received. The Director will contact the parent/guardian to determine an appropriate solution.
- c. The Office Manager or Director will contact the family and review with them their responsibility to provide meals for their student.
- d. Assistance from the county social services may be requested by the school if parents refuse to provide meals or pay for school prepared meals for their children.
- e. A formal letter will be sent to the household notifying them that the debt remains unpaid and the student(s) meal account will be closed.
- f. The expectation is all fees owed to the district will be paid in full on the last day the student will be attending classes.

## Policy Communication

This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing to:

1. All households at or before the start of each school year,
2. Students and families who transfer into the school district upon enrollment, and
3. All school district personnel and third party meal service providers responsible for enforcing this policy.

The school/district will also post the policy on the school district's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

**Source:** Independent School District 4081-07

**Reviewed:** 03/17/2023

**Approved:** 03/17/2023

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To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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

OR

2. **Fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442

OR

3. **E-mail:** [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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