

# **Knox County Schools School Nutrition Program**

P.O. Box 2188  
Knoxville, Tennessee 37901-2188  
Phone: 865-594-3640 Fax: 865-594-1203

## **Meal Charge Procedure**

**Effective Date:** *July 1, 2017*

As provided in SP 46-2016, all school food authorities (SFAs) operating the federal school meal programs (National School Lunch Program and/or School Breakfast Program) must have a written and clearly communicated meal charge administrative procedure in place no later than July 1, 2017. All SFAs must have an administrative procedure in place for children participating at the reduced price or paid meal rate who either do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. SFAs are required to communicate that administrative procedure to families and school and/or district-level staff members as appropriate. SFAs should ensure the administrative procedure is communicated on an annual basis.

Families will have access to the meal charge administrative procedure via Knox County Schools Nutrition webpage, as well as Free and Reduced Meals Applications.

### **Local Charge Administrative Procedure Considerations**

#### **General**

Students who are unable to pay for their meals at the time of the meal service are allowed to charge:

- Breakfast
- Lunch

Students charging breakfast and/or lunch will receive reimbursable meals.

#### **Charge limits**

Charging meals is for emergencies only, and this courtesy is extended only to students. There is no specific limit for number of meals charged; however, students shall not charge a la carte (extra) items.

#### **Household Notification**

Negative balance notification:

- Parents will receive a generated phone call through the school district's automated phone system when a student has a charge of any amount. Generated calls are made Tuesday and Thursday of every school week as long as there is a negative balance.

#### **Delinquent Debt**

Delinquent debt is defined as overdue unpaid meal charges that are considered collectable, with efforts being made to collect them. The debt may remain on the accounting documents until it is either collected or determined to be uncollectable.

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The household's debt will be considered delinquent once the charge amount reaches \$25.00. At this point, the SFA will begin requesting payments through POS-generated letters. Attempts will be made by the School Nutrition Department to collect all debts owed. To pay a debt or for further information, please contact the school cafeteria manager or Mona Underwood at 865-594-9563 or [mona.underwood@knoxschools.org](mailto:mona.underwood@knoxschools.org)

- Managers will use the letter in the Meals Plus database to send home with students who have negative balances of more than \$25.00. Letters will go home on a bi-monthly basis as long as there is a negative balance. Letters will be folded in an envelope in a manner in which others are not able to directly see the letter. Managers should send letters in pre-addressed envelopes to Central Office for mailing.
- Managers may request assistance from the Principal/Assistant Principal at their individual school when charges cannot be collected by any other means.

### Repayment plans

Each household may request a repayment plan that will include payment levels and due dates appropriate to a household's particular circumstances. Please contact Mona Underwood at 865-594-9563 or [mona.underwood@knoxschools.org](mailto:mona.underwood@knoxschools.org) for assistance in establishing a repayment plan.

### Bad Debt

Bad debt is determined to be uncollectable, with that further collection efforts for delinquent debt deemed useless or too costly. Delinquent debt will be considered as bad debt after the end of the current school year.

- Bad debts (debts which have been determined to be uncollectable), including losses (whether actual or estimated) arising from uncollectable accounts and other claims, are unallowable. Related collection costs, and related legal costs, arising from such debts after they have been determined to be uncollectable are also unallowable (section 200.426 of subpart E).
- Bad debt must be written off as an operating loss at the end of the school year; the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA) resources may not be used to cover the costs related to the bad debt. To comply with federal and state regulations, unpaid meal charges and any other related monies owed to the School Nutrition Program will be paid from funds other than those of the School Nutrition Program. The Director of School Nutrition will compile and report all unpaid meal charges and other bad debts to the Knox County Board of Education for reimbursement from the General Purpose School Fund.
- Once delinquent debt is converted to bad debt, the debt shall be referred to a collection agent retained by Knox County Schools for such purpose. The Director of Schools shall establish in procedure a reasonable threshold for the level of debt to be referred for collection.
- Once delinquent meal charges are converted to bad debt, records relating to those charges must be maintained in accordance with record retention requirements in 7 CFR 210.9(b)(17) and 7 CFR 210.15(b).

### Additional Resources

Families may find assistance with applying for free or reduced price schools meals by contacting Mona Underwood at 865-594-9563 or [mona.underwood@knoxschools.org](mailto:mona.underwood@knoxschools.org)

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*To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter 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;*
- 2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or*
- 3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)*

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