

MEAL CHARGES

In accordance with state and federal law, the Independence Community School District adopts the following policy to ensure school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, prevent the overt identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the nonprofit school nutrition program.

Payment of Meals

Students have use of a meal account. Families may add money to student accounts using electronic payment options, cash, or check.

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases. Schools are encouraged to provide a reimbursable meal to students with outstanding meal charge debt. If an alternate meal is provided, the meal must be the same meal presented in the same manner to any student requesting an alternate meal.

Employees have use of a meal account, but will not be allowed to charge any amount.

Negative Account Balances

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Additionally, the school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. The school district will coordinate communications with the student's parent or guardian to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Parents or guardians will be notified of an outstanding negative balance once the student owes five meals or more. Parents or guardians will be notified by personal phone calls to the number on file with the school, emails, and letters. Negative balances of more than the value of five meals not paid prior to end of the semester will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. Options for collection may include: collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal method permitted by law.

Unpaid Student Meals Account

The district will establish an unpaid student meals account in a school nutrition fund. Funds from private sources and funds from the district flexibility account may be deposited into the unpaid school meals account in accordance with law. Funds deposited into this account shall be used only to pay individual student meal debt at the discretion of the superintendent.

Communication of the Policy

The policy and supporting information regarding meal charges shall be provided in writing to:

- All households at or before the start of each school year;
- Students and families who transfer into the district, at time of transfer; and
- All staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy.

Records of how and when the policy and supporting information were communicated to households and staff will be retained.

It is the responsibility of the superintendent to develop administrative regulations for implementing this policy.

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- Legal Reference:
- 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 *et seq.*
 - 7 C.F.R. §§ 210 *et seq.*
 - U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 46-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: LOCAL MEAL CHARGE POLICIES (2016).
 - U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 47-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: CLARIFICATION ON COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT MEAL PAYMENTS (2016).
 - U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 57-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: GUIDANCE AND Q&A (2016).
 - Iowa Code 283A.
 - 281 I.A.C. 58.
- Cross Reference:
- 710.1 School Nutrition Program
 - 710.2 Free or Reduced Price Meals Eligibility
 - 710.3 Vending Machine

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