

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM MEAL CHARGE POLICY

I. PURPOSE

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

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. It is the intent of the Talladega County Board of Education to provide an opportunity for each child to eat a nutritious breakfast and lunch daily. However, the goal is to also promote healthy eating habits to enhance classroom learning while maintaining the financial integrity of the School Breakfast Program and National School Lunch Program. Talladega County Board of Education's commitment is to eliminate any stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges.

B. It is the policy of Talladega County Board of Education to offer breakfast and lunch meals that comply with all state and federal regulations.

C. Full Paid Meals – Elementary, Middle and High School Students who has a paid eligibility status will pay for breakfast and/or lunch meals at the Talladega County Board of Education published standard rate for breakfast and lunch each day. Students will be allowed to charge meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. Once a student has charged meals, he/she will not be allowed to charge a la carte items. However, the student will continue to be offered a regular reimbursable meal which will be charged to the child's meal account at the standard rate.

Reduced Meals - Students receiving reduced price meals will be allowed to receive a breakfast and lunch each day at the USDA recommended rate. A student will be allowed to charge meals to his/her account after the balance reaches zero. Once a student has charged meals, he/she will not be allowed to charge a la carte items. However, students will continue to be offered a regular reimbursable meal which will be charged to the child's meal account at the standard rate.

Free Meals - Students with a free eligibility determination will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch each day. All A la carte purchases must be prepaid.

D. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are distributed to all families in the district prior to the student's first day of classes. In addition, applications are available at each school site in the cafeteria manager's office or the district Child Nutrition Program office. Additionally, a parent or guardian may apply online at <https://talladega.rocketscanapps.com>. If household income or household size changes, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

III. CHARGE POLICY

- Any student's account that has insufficient funds to pay for breakfast and/or lunch will be allowed to charge a breakfast and/or lunch meal.
- No students will be allowed to charge A La Carte items.
- No alternative meal will be served or offered at any Talladega County Board of Education school campus at any time.
- No adult meal charges including A La Carte are allowed. This includes all school employees. Federal and state regulations require that adults who are served school meals are to provide payment at the time of service. This regulation coincides with the Talladega County Board of Education approved meal prices for adults.
- Child Nutrition Program employees employed to work directly in the food preparation site are entitled free of charge, to a meal for breakfast and a meal for lunch.

IV. NOTIFICATION OF ACCOUNT STATUS

- Households are made aware of insufficient student account balances in different formats, depending on grade levels or circumstances.
- Families may check account status via PayPams if they have a registered account.
- Parents/guardians may call, email or text the school nutrition manager for account balances.
- The Child Nutrition Program will give or send weekly and/or daily insufficient balance notices home to parents advising them of student meal account balances.
- The Child Nutrition Program will encourage parents to complete a Free/Reduced price meal application.
- A formal letter may be sent home to parents via US postal service requesting payment of balances owed.
- A school nutrition manager or principal (designee) may contact a household to request payment.
- Nutrition manager will keep principal updated if no payment is received.
- School principal or designee will contact the family and review with them their responsibility to provide funds to their child's account.
- Refunds on a school nutrition account after separation from the child's school will be a maximum of 90 days.

V. COLLECTION OF UNPAID DEBT

- Parents or guardians are responsible for all unpaid meal charges.
- Unpaid meal charges are considered delinquent debt.
- All unpaid debt prior to change of meal status is considered delinquent and must be paid.
- At the time of a student's separation from Talladega County Board of Education, all delinquent debt must be cleared before official records are released.
- Method of payment for uncollected debt must be paid via cash or certified check.
- The local school principal will be responsible for collecting monies for charged meals and eliminating any outstanding indebtedness of students by the end of each school year. Documentation of efforts to collect all charges and repayment should be maintained.

MEAL CHARGE POLICY WILL BE PROVIDED EACH YEAR TO ALL STUDENTS / PARENTS IN THE STUDENTS RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES HANDBOOK

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