



Jody Ian Goeler, Superintendent of Schools
Christopher Melillo, Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Date: August 8, 2018
To: Parents/Guardians, Students and Staff
RE: Food Service Lunch Charging Policy

The Food Service Program at Hamden Public Schools is a self-supporting operation that must rely on meal payments and federal/state reimbursements for funding. Children participating in the School Breakfast and National School Lunch programs receive a healthy, nutritious, reimbursable meal that meets the USDA requirements. A "reimbursable meal" is defined as a meal consisting of at least three of the five offered meal components (grain, meat or meat alternative, fruit, vegetable and milk) and must include a fruit and/or vegetable component. Payments are made in advance or at the time of meal purchase.

Payment Responsibilities until Approval of Free and Reduced Priced Meal Application:

Parents/Guardians who apply for free and reduced price meal benefits are responsible for payment of all school meals and accumulated charges until approval is granted. Applications are provided to all families in the district prior to the school year. A **new application** needs to be completed each school year. In addition, applications are available at the school offices and online at the Hamden Public School's website: <http://www.hamden.org>.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires that all school districts participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast programs establish and clearly communicate their local meal charge policy at the beginning of the school year. The following notification outlines Hamden's Lunch Charging Regulation that was adopted in May of 2018. For more information, please see **Business and Non-Instructional Operations Policy number 3542.43**, which is available online at the Hamden Public School's website: https://www.hamden.org/uploaded/Policies/Series_3000/3542.43.

LUNCH CHARGING REGULATION

Hamden Public School's Food Service Department utilizes a computerized system to manage students' personal meal accounts. Students are expected to maintain a positive balance to avoid delinquent debt. The system allows parents to pre-pay for meals, view transaction history, and create low-balance email alerts.

For times when students do not have a positive balance in their meal account or have forgotten or lost their money, the Board of Education has established a system to allow a student to charge a meal. In order to sustain the District's food services program, the District cannot permit the excessive charging of student meals.

The District uses MySchoolBucks.com, which is designed to extend families helpful services related to a child's school account information. These services include the ability to view transaction history for up to 30 days, set-up low-balance email alerts, and make payments on-line directly to a lunch account. Negative balance status can be avoided by making a payment on the MySchoolBucks.com website.

Definitions

"**Delinquent Debt**" are unpaid meal charges, like any other money owed to the nonprofit school food service account when payment is overdue, as defined by state or local policies.

Elementary Students

1. The District shall maintain a "no charging policy." The District strongly discourages meal charges, but understands that an occasional emergency makes it necessary at the elementary level. The charge/no charge policy will be strictly enforced to eliminate unnecessary debt within the School Food Service Program.

Elementary Students (continued)

2. Any student whose account has insufficient funds (i.e., is at the charging limit) and who does not bring a meal from home may charge up to a negative balance of \$8.00. When the charge limit is reached, the student will receive the main lunch offering each day, in accordance to their dietary restriction, and the cost of this meal will be charged to the child's meal account. This practice will continue until the outstanding balance is paid in full. A-la-carte items may not be charged.
3. When a charge has occurred, a written notification shall be sent home to parents.
4. All credited meals must be repaid. The Connecticut State Department of Education requires that the household pays all delinquent student debts no later than June 30th to ensure that students' accounts are closed. These student meal accounts must be at a zero balance for the next school year.

Middle School Students

As a courtesy and convenience, Hamden Middle School extends credit to students to purchase lunch, with the understanding that there are occasional moments when lunch money is lost, forgotten, or inadvertently overlooked. We ask that "charging privileges" be exercised as infrequently as possible and not used as a payment practice. Middle School students may borrow funds from the main office to pay for a single lunch with the expectation that the money borrowed will be repaid the next day. Should the funds not be repaid, the student may not borrow again. When a charge has occurred, a written notification shall be sent home to parents. We recommend that parents monitor the balance in their child's lunch account to avoid the need to borrow. The Connecticut State Department of Education requires all delinquent student debts to be paid no later than June 30th.

High School Level

High school students are responsible to make payment for their lunch in advance or in the lunch line. Special circumstances will be considered on an individual basis for charge privileges.

Delinquent Debt and Bad Debt

The District's efforts to recover from households money owed due to the charging of meals must not have a negative impact on the children involved and shall focus primarily on the adults in the household responsible for providing funds for meal purchases. The school food authority is encouraged to consider whether the benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs which would be incurred to achieve those collections.

Nondiscrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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, 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;
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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