

## **8510 MEAL CHARGE AND PROHIBITION AGAINST MEAL SHAMING**

### **Purpose**

The goal of the Ossining Union Free School District is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. The purpose of this policy is to insure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program, and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the Ossining Union Free School District in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and snack meals only. The Ossining Union Free School District provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

### **Policy**

**Free Meal Benefit** - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

**Full Pay Students** - Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

### **ONGOING STAFF TRAINING:**

- Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the NYSED Webinar or the school's training program.
- Staff training includes ongoing eligibility certification for free meals.

### **PARENT NOTIFICATION:**

- The District Office will notify parents/guardians that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted and has accrued meal charges within seven (7) days of the charge and then every seven (7) days/weeks thereafter.

### **PARENT OUTREACH:**

- The District will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to complete a free and reduced priced lunch meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- School staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with the completion of the free and reduced price meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate. Contact and attempts to contact the parent/guardian should be documented. Attempts to contact the parent/guardian should be done at least two times.

### **MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:**

- Schools will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- Students who incur meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.
- Schools will not throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous meal charges.
- Schools will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

### **ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:**

- District staff will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload to maximize free eligibility at least quarterly.
- District staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in the school enrollment packet.
- The school enrollment packet will provide an explanation of the process and instructions on how to use the electronic meal application.
- The District will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing five or more meal charges.
- The District will use administrative prerogative judiciously, only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the parent/guardian only with available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.
- The District will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators to certify eligible students.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance through the school district website or with a check payable to Ossining UFSD. Further details are available on our webpage. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds for withdrawn, and graduating students; a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer to a sibling's account with a written request.

Unclaimed Funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Ossining Union School District Food Service Program.

Outstanding student charges (also called delinquent debt) resulting from nonpayment for school meals is not an allowable cost to the nonprofit school food service account and cannot be absorbed by the School Nutrition Program at the end of the school year or carried forward to the next school year. If the SFA allows students to accumulate charges and those charges are not paid, the school must subsidize the nonprofit school food service account for all unpaid meals by June 30th of each year. The subsidy must be from the general or other non-federal source.

First Reading: June 13, 2007

Second Reading and Adoption: July 25, 2007

First Reading: December 14, 2011

Second Reading and Adoption: January 25, 2012

Revised as a First Reading: August 22, 2018

Second Reading and Adoption: September 25, 2018