



Hamilton County Schools Meal Charge Administrative Procedure

Effective Date: July 1, 2017
Last Updated: August 4, 2023

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 this 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 be provided the meal charge policy and procedures annually in the registration packet. Transfer students will be provided the same information in their registration packet. Families will have access to the meal charge administrative procedure at any time via the District website under the School Nutrition section. Meal charge information is included in student handbooks and in the free and reduced meal application packet.

Local Charge Administrative Procedure Considerations

General

Grades pre-K through 8 students are allowed to charge breakfast and lunch, receiving a reimbursable meal of their choice.

High school students in grades 9-12 are allowed to charge breakfast and lunch up to \$40, receiving a reimbursable meal of their choice.

Only one meal per meal service is permitted to be charged. No a la carte, second meals, or adult meals may be charged.

Charge limits

Students in Grades Pre-K through 8 have no charge limit.
Students in Grades 9-12 have a \$40 charge limit.

Household Notification

Low balances over \$0.00

Parents can monitor their student's balance with a free account at <https://linqconnect.com>. Once registered, parents can receive notifications when their student's balance drops below an established amount.

For any negative balance

The parent of each student with a negative balance receives a weekly phone call and an email (if available through Power School, the student data base system). This continues throughout the school year.

SNP IT staff will send a detailed balance of each student with charges to the District Finance Department weekly for review.

For negative balances over \$25.00

Managers will print off or e-mail (if available) charge notification letters weekly, listing the balance each child in the household has for negative balances up to \$50.00. This letter will also include the link to the family portal where parents can submit a free and reduced application and make payments.

If the balance gets paid but new ones occur, the above process repeats itself.

For negative balances over \$50

For students with negative balances over \$50.00, mailed letters or email notifications (if available) will be sent out monthly from central office staff. This letter will also include the link to the family portal where parents can submit a free and reduced application and make payments. Additionally, when an account first exceeds this threshold, the parent will be contacted and offered assistance with submitting a free or reduced application.

For negative balances over \$100

For students with negative balances of \$100.00 or more, mailed letters and email notifications (if available) will be sent out monthly from central office staff. This letter will also include the link to the family portal where parents can submit a free and reduced application and make payments. Additionally, when an account first exceeds this threshold, the parent will be contacted and offered assistance with submitting a free or reduced application.

Each additional letter has escalating language.

Returned Checks

When a check is written to the School Nutrition Department for a student meal account and returned by the bank for any reason the following procedures are followed.

Checks under \$100 are deposited on the student's account and payment is sought from the parent. Parents are sent a letter notifying them of the returned check and that they have 15 days to pay the amount of the original check.

During that 15-day period, the parents are called to remind them about the check. If the money is not paid by the end of the 15-day period, it is deducted from the child's account.

Returned checks written on a closed bank account or for \$100 or greater are adjusted from the student's account. This is done as soon as this department is notified by the bank.

Delinquent Debt

Delinquent debt is defined as overdue unpaid meal charges that are considered collectable, with efforts being made to collect them. Payment will be made to the cafeteria.

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 the Finance Department for establishing a repayment plan.

Bad Debt

Bad debt is determined to be uncollectable when further collection efforts for delinquent debt are deemed useless or too costly. Delinquent debt will be considered as bad debt after June 30 of each 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 costs to the nonprofit school food service account (NSFSA). Related collection costs, and related legal costs, arising from such debts after they have been determined to be uncollectable are also unallowable (2 CFR 200.426 of subpart E).

At the end of year, the amount of unpaid returned checks is declared as a bad debt and is added to the Unpaid Charges for the year, which is billed to Hamilton County Department of Education.

Bad debt must be written off as an operating loss by June 30th of each school fiscal year. The NSFSA resources may not be used to cover the costs related to the bad debt. The accumulated bad debt, which includes unpaid charges and unpaid returned checks, will be paid to the School Nutrition Program for the totals as of June 30th of each year. Once delinquent meal charges are converted to bad debt, records relating to those charges are maintained in accordance with record retention requirements in 7 CFR 210.9(b)(17) and 7 CFR 210.15(b).

Free and Reduced Meals

Families may apply for free or reduced meals by visiting <https://lingconnect.com>. They may also find assistance with applying for free or reduced-price school meals by calling 423-498-7290.

Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or
2. **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
Program.Intake@usda.gov

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