

MEAL CHARGE AND PROHIBITION AGAINST SHAMING POLICY

I. PURPOSE:

The goal of the Remsenburg-Speonk UFSD 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 can potentially 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 Remsenburg-Speonk UFSD 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. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

II. POLICY:

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

Reduced Meal Benefit - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a lunch meal of their choice for \$0.25 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. A student will be allowed to charge a maximum of 5 meals to their account after the balance reaches zero or if the student has lost or forgotten his or her money, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

III. 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 or reduced-price meals.

IV. PARENT NOTIFICATION:

Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted within 2 days and then every 2 weeks thereafter. Parents/guardians will be notified that a student has accrued meal charges within 2 days of the charge and then every 2 weeks thereafter.

V. PARENT OUTREACH:

Staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. School staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a 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 completion of 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.

VI. 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. Schools will not serve alternate meals (i.e., cheese sandwich). The District will not use a debt collector to collect unpaid meal debt.

VII. ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

School staff will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload at least monthly to maximize free eligibility. School staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced-price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet. Schools using electronic meal application will provide an explanation of the process in the school enrollment packet and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost. Schools will provide at least two additional free

and reduced-price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges. Schools 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. Schools will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students. The District will provide 30-day carryover of eligibility for free and reduced-price students from the previous school year during the first 30 operating days of a new school year, or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever is first. The District will accept the free and reduced-price eligibility from transfer students.

VIII. PAYMENTS:

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via LunchTime on the school's website, under the Cafeteria section of the Departments tab or a check payable to Remsenburg-Speonk School Lunch Fund. Further details are available on our webpage at rsufsd.weebly.com. 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 may will be carried over to the next school year.

IX. REFUNDS:

Refunds for withdrawn and graduating students will be made upon receipt of a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account. 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. **After two attempts are made to contact the parents/guardian, if no action is taken** unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Remsenburg-Speonk Food Service Program.

Ref: Child Nutrition Act of 1966, 42 U.S.C. §1771 et seq.
National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. §1715 et seq.
Guidance document, State Education Department, Child Nutrition Program;
"Establishing a Meal Charge Policy," August 2005

Adopted: August 13, 2018