

**Union School District  
Child Nutrition Services  
Meal Charge Policy**

Union School District (“the District”) seeks to offer a student meal program that provides healthy meals to students during the school day. As part of the District’s meal program, District schools participate in the National School Lunch Program (“NSLP”) and the School Breakfast Program (“SBP”) to provide free or reduced cost meals to eligible students. Students not eligible for free or reduced cost meals under NSLP or SBP may be charged for meals at the District’s approved and published meal rate. Students eligible for reduced cost meals may be charged for meals at established federal rates.

This Meal Charge Policy is required by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for school districts that participate in NSLP and SBP to address unpaid meal charges. It is intended to comply with federal regulations, including 2 C.F.R. 200.426, Education Code section 49557.5, and state and federal guidance, as applicable. The Policy regarding meal charging and collection is established District-wide.

**Goals:**

- To maintain a positive experience for students during meal service.
- To treat all students with dignity and respect.
- To provide the same meals to all students regardless of account balance status.
- To promote parent responsibility for meal payments.
- To encourage parents to pre-pay all meals.
- To minimize meal charges and negative account balances.

**Meal Charge Procedure:**

Students who are not eligible for free or reduced cost meals and who do not have money to purchase a meal (whether pre-paid or day-of-purchase) will be provided with a reimbursable meal. These meals will be considered “meal charges” and will be charged to the student account as an outstanding debt. There will be no difference in the meal served to students who require a meal charge and those served to students who do not require a meal charge. The District will ensure that a student is not shamed, treated differently, or served a different meal due to any unpaid meal charge. No student will be denied a meal for any reason.

A la carte items (e.g., snacks), extra entrees and adult purchases cannot be charged to student accounts as outstanding debt and therefore will not be provided to students who are not able to purchase them. Pre-paid funds or day-of-purchases funds must be available for a student to purchase these items.

**Pre-Payment Benefits:**

The District strongly encourages families to pre-pay for their meals. Pre-paying for meals is a simpler way of managing the accounts and prevents unpaid meal charges. Paying for meals before the meal service also helps the lunch lines move quickly, giving children more time to enjoy their meals. Households can pay for meals by paying online at [www.family.titank12.com](http://www.family.titank12.com) or with a check payable to “Union School District.” A low balance email message alert can be set up to notify parents/guardians to add funds to the account.

### **Parent/Guardian Responsibility:**

Parents/Guardians are responsible for meal payments to the Food Service Program. Parents/Guardians are responsible to provide the District with their preferred contact information to assist the District in notifying them of their outstanding debt. Discreet notices of low or deficit balances will be sent to parents at regular intervals during the school year.

**All households** are encouraged to fill out a Free and Reduced Price Meal application each year. Information regarding free and reduced price meals will be provided to families at the beginning of the school year, when new students register in the District, and on the District's website at <https://unionsd.sodexomyway.com/>. This information will also identify a District employee and contact information for families that need assistance in completing the application. If you now receive Food Stamps, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWorks), Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payments (Kin GAP), Food Distribution on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) benefits, or Medicaid, your child may be eligible to receive free meals.

### **Negative Account Balances:**

The Food Services Department will monitor student accounts and outstanding balances on a regular basis. When there is a negative account balance, the Food Services Department will notify the parents/guardians no later than 10 days after the student's account reaches a negative balance. Before sending this notification to the parents/guardians, the Food Services Department will exhaust all options and methods to directly certify the student for free or reduced-price meals. If the Food Services Department is not able to directly certify the student, the Food Services Department will provide the parent or guardian with a paper copy of, or an electronic link to, an application with the notification and contact the parents/guardians to encourage application submission.

Automated letters will be sent weekly to email addresses provided by parents/guardians for student accounts that have a negative balance of \$3.50 or more. The Food Services Department will send written notices via U.S. mail to parents/guardians for student accounts that have a negative balance of \$10.50 or more but no email address on file.

The District will not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid school meal fees. School personnel and volunteers of the District will not take any disciplinary action that is against a student to result in the denial or delay of a nutritionally adequate meal, as defined in Education Code section 49553, to that student. The District will ensure that a student is not shamed, treated differently, or served a different meal due to any unpaid meal charge.

### **End of Year Procedures:**

At the end of the school year, any positive funds left in a student's account will be carried over to the following year. Upon requests from parents/guardians, the funds can be transferred to sibling accounts. Parents/guardians may also request a refund of the available balance or donate the available balance to satisfy unpaid meal charges of other District students. If parents/guardians do not provide instructions with respect to available funds, the remaining funds will be carried-over to the following year or refunded, as appropriate.

### **Notice of Meal Charge Procedures:**

This Policy will be provided in writing to all families at the start of each school year and to families transferring to the school midyear.

For additional information about this program, please contact Food Services Department at (408)377-8010 ext. 44203 or [foodservices@unionsd.org](mailto:foodservices@unionsd.org).