

## **MEAL CHARGES**

In accordance with state and federal law, the Clarinda Community School District adopts the following policy to ensure school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, prevent the overt identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the nonprofit school nutrition program.

Families are encouraged to apply for free or reduced meals anytime during the school year. Applications are available at all school offices or at the district website. Free and reduced applications are confidential.

### **Payment of Meals**

All meal purchases are prepaid before meal service begins. Payment can be made at any school administrative office (elementary school, middle school, high school), the district administrative office, or online through the district data management system. Families are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient funds for their children to receive meals. Families that have a financial hardship can apply for free or reduced meals at any time. Students shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance. At the discretion of the superintendent, students with meal charges that have been sent to collection shall be allowed to purchase a meal.

### **Negative Account Balances**

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Additionally, the school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. The school district will coordinate communications with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Families will be notified when the account does not have sufficient funds to provide meal services for a week. The district may notify families of delinquent debt by email, letter, phone, and text messaging as possible. Negative balances that exceed the value of one week of meals and not paid within two weeks will be turned over to the superintendent or the superintendent's designee for collection. Failure to make payment to the district may result in use of additional collection options, such as collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal methods permitted by law.

### **Unpaid Student Meals Account**

The district will establish an unpaid student meals account in a school nutrition fund. Funds from private sources and funds from the district flexibility account may be deposited into the unpaid school meals account in accordance with law. Funds deposited into this account shall be used only to pay individual student meal debt.

### **Communication of the Policy**

The policy and supporting information regarding meal charges shall be provided in writing to:

- All households at or before the start of each school year;
- Students and families who transfer into the district, at time of transfer; and
- All staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy.

Records of how and when the policy and supporting information was communicated to households and staff will be retained. The superintendent may develop an administrative process to implement this policy.

Legal Reference:       42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 *et seq.*  
                              7 C.F.R. §§ 210 *et seq.*

U.S. Dep't of Agric., SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies (2016).

U.S. Dep't of Agric., SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016).

U.S. Dep't of Agric., SP 57-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A (2016).

Iowa Code 283A.

281 I.A.C. 58.

Cross Reference:     710.1 School Food Program  
                              710.2 Free or Reduced Cost Meals Eligibility  
                              710.3 Vending Machine