

REGULATION

2018

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Business Operations

SUBJECT: Meal Charge and Prohibition against Meal Shaming Regulation

I. Purpose

The goal of the Seneca Falls Central 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, 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 plan is to provide awareness on unpaid meal charges throughout the Seneca Falls Central School District in a way that does not stigmatize distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this plan pertain to regular priced complete reimbursable school breakfast and lunch only. The Seneca Falls Central School District provides this plan as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the complete reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, extra portions, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

II. Procedure

Free Meal Benefit - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free complete reimbursable breakfast and a free complete reimbursable lunch meal from the meal choices offered 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 complete reimbursable breakfast of their choice for \$.25 cents and a complete reimbursable lunch of their choice for \$.25 cents each day. The charge meals offered to students will be the 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.

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 the complete 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.

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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.

Parent Notification:

- Weekly emails will be sent to families that have an outstanding balance. The expectation is that the parent/guardian will pay the outstanding balance in cash, check or online (via My School Bucks). Students who have not supplied an email will have a letter sent home via the student.

Parent Outreach:

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians when to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals when there are outstanding meal charges.
- 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.
- If the outstanding balance has not been paid within a reasonable time (after 2 weeks of emails from the school lunch office) the school's Social Worker or Guidance Counselor will contact the parent/guardian by phone to inform

Minimizing Student Distress:

- School 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. If a student chooses to take an "extra"

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portion and does not have the money to pay for it or has charges the extra portion will be asked to put back.

- 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:

- 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 the back to school packet as well as new registration packets.
- 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 school liaison for foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via www.myschoolbucks.com, **cash** or with a check payable to the **Seneca Falls Lunch Program**. Further details are available on our webpage at www.senecafallscsd.org, under “Departments” and “Food Service”. 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.

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 Seneca Falls Central School District Food Service Program.

Adopted: 06/07/2018