

MEAL CHARGE

The goal of the Sweetwater Union High School District (District) is to provide students with healthy meals each day. However, unpaid charges place a large financial burden on the Nutrition Services Department. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Program, and to provide oversight, ongoing monitoring, and accountability for meals served in the District.

The intent of this policy is to establish uniform meal accounting procedures throughout the District. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced school breakfast and lunch meals only. While the USDA Child Nutrition Program does not require that a student who pays for regular priced meals be served a meal without payment, the District provides this meal as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their lunch money.

Full Pay Students

Students will pay for meals at the District's published standard rate each day. Students must prepay or pay cash at the register for all meals and a la carte purchases. When a student's account balance reaches zero, no a la carte items will be sold to the student, and he/she will only be offered up to three (3) meals total, which can be for either breakfast or lunch. Upon the initial missed payment, District staff will notify legal guardians of missed payment and provide a reminder that the student's account has reached zero (0) funds and the account needs to be replenished. Subsequent reminders will be sent, if the account is not replenished. Meals may be denied to a student after the third free meal. No a la carte or snack items will be allowed to be sold if the account has a negative balance.

Free Meal Benefit

Free status students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast, lunch, and supper (if available) each day. A la carte purchases must be prepaid. No a la carte or snack items will be allowed to be sold if the account has a negative balance.

Reduced Meal Benefit

Reduced status students will be allowed to receive a breakfast, lunch, or supper (if available) meal at no charge each day. A la carte purchases must be prepaid. No a la carte or snack items will be allowed to be sold if the account has a negative balance, even if the student offers to pay in cash.

Parents/Guardians

It is the parent's and/or guardian's responsibility to ensure their child has sufficient funds on their account to cover all school meals. All payments should be made to the food service program. Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent directly to the parents/guardians every two weeks during the school year.

MEAL CHARGE (continued)

School Cafeterias

All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and said records are available by setting up an account at www.paypams.com or by calling the Nutrition Services Office.

Payments

All students, parents or guardians can pay for meals in cash at the point of service, in advance via online at www.paypams.com or by check or by cash payable to Student Nutrition Services. Further details are available on the district webpage at nutrition.sweetwaterschools.org. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a student may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds

Refunds for withdrawn and graduating students: a written request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. An e-mail request is acceptable. 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

Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the District.

Child Hunger Prevention and Fair Treatment Act of 2017

Pursuant to Education Code Section 49557.5, the shaming of students who do not have the money to pay for a meal or whose family has unpaid meal debt is against the law. As a district that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP), all school personnel are prohibited from denying or delaying a school meal or serving a differentiated meal to any student based on status to pay. Rather, the District, through this policy, has established ways with the parent/guardians to resolve any unpaid school meal fees. However, The Child Hunger Prevention and Fair Treatment Act of 2017 is not intended to allow for indefinite accrual of unpaid meal fees.

Balanced Owed

Collection of owed balances will follow collection procedures:

MEAL CHARGE (continued)

- 1) Prior to sending out notices to parents or guardians, the district shall attempt to directly certify the student for free or reduced-price meals or attempt to locate the student on CALPADS homeless, migrant, runaway, foster, Head Start list. Where families are not on free or reduced-price meals, the district shall provide the family with a paper or electronic application.
- 2) Following an attempted certification process, the district will issue notices of negative balances by mail or emailed every two weeks.
- 3) If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis (after three missed payments), the administration will investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed.

Uncollected Balances

Balances that are severely past due will result in an account being placed on hold, and the student not able to purchase any a la carte items unless the balance is paid in full. A full meal may be purchased with cash. Balances will be reported to the school principal or counselor for additional help with collections and only communicated to parents/guardians. On June 30 of the current school year, all uncollected balances become the property of the District and a transfer from the general fund will be made to School Nutrition (Fund 13) to zero out balances.

The District's efforts to collect debt shall be consistent with district policies, California Department of Education (CDE) guidance, and 2 CFR 200.426.

Notification

Parents or guardians of all students must be informed of the availability of reimbursable school meals and must be provided information about applying for free or reduced price meals (7 CFR 245.5). Consistent with the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) and 42 U.S.C. 1758(b)(2)(A), the district will publicly announce the income eligibility guidelines for free and reduced price meals annually, either on or before the opening of school, including when a student transfers, in the annual notification, and through other existing notification methods. The information will also be shared annually with district staff and administrators.