

**San Francisco Unified School District
Student Nutrition Services
Administrative Regulation on Meal Payments & Charges**

I. Meal Charges

The San Francisco Board of Education recognizes that students may have emergency situations where they do not have money to pay for a school meal. To ensure that students do not go hungry, but also to promote responsible student behavior and minimize the fiscal burden to the District, the Board will allow students who may forget meal money to "charge" the cost of meals to be paid back at a later date subject to the terms of this policy.

The intent of this protocol is to establish and communicate concise, reasonable and updated expectations for staff response associated with requests by individuals to charge meals. At the same time, it attempts to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements for the Child Nutrition Program and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

Unpaid charges reduce revenue that affects the district's ability to pay food bills, employee salaries and many other expenses. Unpaid charges and the costs associated in collecting these charges result in higher meal prices for all students and reduced resources for educational purposes.

No student will be deprived of a meal nor be served a differentiated meal (i.e. peanut butter/jelly or cheese sandwich) due to insufficient, forgotten or lost meal money. However, Student Nutrition Services is seeking approval to provide a modified meal for those parents and families requesting to block charges.

District meal charge system goals are:

- To treat all students with dignity and respect;
- To maintain a positive experience for each student's during meal service;
- To establish practices that are age appropriate; and
- To promote parents and familys' responsibility for meal payments and self-responsibility of the student;
- To ensure no student is sent away hungry.

Payment in advance for meals enables the district to achieve these goals. See below for pre-payment options.

Below are the notification steps Student Nutrition Services will take to alert students and families money is owed:

1. When a student who has not pre-paid and is not eligible for a free or reduced price meal approaches the end of the meal line (aka "point of service"), the cafeteria staff will ask if the student if they have their lunch or breakfast payment.

2. In emergency situations where a child arrives without money, the cafeteria staff will allow him/her to charge the regular meal to his/ her account. The student will not be served a different meal nor will they be denied a meal. The cashier will notify the child a negative balance is being charged to the account and the family will be required to pay.
3. Beginning in August, Student Nutrition Services will provide weekly *Notification of Negative Balance* letters. Letters will be printed and sent to the schools for distribution home.
4. Additionally, Student Nutrition Services will provide weekly reports to schools on which students have accrued charges. These reports will also include the Meal Application status of the students with charges.
5. If a family does not pay off meal charges, the child's official documents, such as report cards, class schedules, or locker assignments, will be withheld or other penalties will be applied.

II. Meal Applications for Free & Reduced Priced Meals

Every year, families are required to re-apply for meal benefits, and so must turn in a new Application for Free or Reduced Priced Meals. Now families may apply online at: <https://schoolmealapp.sfusd.edu>. Multiple languages are supported. If applying online, there is no need to submit a paper application.

Families must not assume they qualify for free meals until they receive a *Notification of Eligibility* letter for the new school year from Student Nutrition Services. (This letter indicates the result of the families' application for free meal benefits. It tells the family if the student's eligibility is Free, Reduced, or Full Pay/Paid.)

If a family receives a *Notification of Eligibility* letter from Student Nutrition Services stating the family's eligibility is Full Pay/Paid and the family believes this result is not correct, the family must contact Student Nutrition Services immediately. If the family does not respond, the family is responsible to pay for any meal charges which accrue.

Further, parents and families are responsible to ensure their meal application eligibility status is kept up to date.

Temporary Approval for Free Meals

In accordance with Federal guidelines, if a family reports zero income, they will be given a temporary approval for free meals. Families which have temporary meal benefits must re-apply every 45 days. They are responsible to pay for any accrued meal charges due to a lapse in the meal application status.

Verification of Eligibility for School Meals

Per Federal guidelines, school officials may check the information on the application at any time during the school year.¹ You may be asked to send information to prove your income, or current eligibility for Food Stamps, CalWORKs, Kin-GAP or FDPIR.

III. Duration of Eligibility for First 30 Days of School

¹ Federal Programs Regulation, Subchapter A – Child Nutrition Programs, Part 245, Determining Eligibility for Free & Reduced Price Meal & Free Milk in Schools, 245.6a Verification Requirements

From the first day of school to the 30th day, Student Nutrition Services is required by Federal regulations to use the student's eligibility status as of the end of the prior school year.² Therefore, if a student was not eligible for a free or reduced meal at the end of last year, that student must pay for meals unless a qualified meal application has been processed.

After the first 30 days of school, any student who has not submitted an updated Meal Application (or have not been qualified as eligible through Direct Certification) will be set to a Full Pay/Paid eligibility status. All students should turn in a meal application before the deadline to ensure the prior year's eligibility status is not interrupted.

IV. Payment of Meals

Families have several options to prepay for meals:

- Online at www.MealpayPlus.com
- By phone at 866-438-7842
- Or pay in person at school or at the office of Student Nutrition Services, 841 Ellis St. SF CA 94109.

Each school shall inform parents that meals can be paid for in advance and the balances maintained in their child's account to minimize the possibility that the child may be without meal money on any given day. Although prepayment is highly encouraged, students may continue to pay cash on a daily basis. Multiple languages are supported.

Adults are welcome to participate and purchase meals at schools. Adults pay the posted adult price for breakfasts and lunches. School staff are encouraged to open a prepayment Mealpay account. Student Nutrition Services can set up an account and provide the adult with a pin number to use in the lunch line. Adult accounts are not allowed to charge meals.

V. Changes In Meal Eligibility Status

Per Federal guidelines, Student Nutrition Services can not request the government to retroactively reimburse for meals served to non-eligible students if those students later became eligible as free or reduced.³ Therefore, even if a family becomes eligible for free meals later in the school, after they have accrued charges, the family is still responsible to pay for the meals.

VI. Refunds & Unclaimed Funds

For students who have either graduated or withdrawn from SFUSD, a written request for a refund (which must include student ID number (H0), student name, and home address) should be submitted to 841 Ellis St. SF CA, 94109 or email schoollunch@sfusd.edu. All refunds must be requested within three months of graduation or withdrawal. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the San Francisco Unified School District Student Nutrition Services.

² Federal Programs Regulation, Subchapter A – Child Nutrition Programs, Part 245, Determining Eligibility for Free & Reduced Price Meal & Free Milk in Schools, 245.6 Application, eligibility and certification of children for free and reduced price meals and free milk.

³ Federal Programs Regulation, Subchapter A – Child Nutrition Programs, Part 210, National School Lunch Program, Subpart A-General, 210.8 Claims for Reimbursement