EF - Nutrition Services: Unpaid Meal Charges and Prohibition Against Food Shaming

EF - NUTRITION SERVICES: UNPAID MEAL CHARGES AND PROHIBITION

AGAINST FOOD SHAMING

The Board recognizes that some students may have outstanding balances for meal charges from past school years.

The purpose of this policy is to provide oversight in the collection of outstanding student meal balances, while ensuring that students are not shamed or stigmatized for having unpaid meal charges.

PROHIBITION ON PUNISHMENT RELATED TO UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

In accordance with 20-A MRSA §6681 the school will not openly identify or otherwise stigmatize a student who has payments due for previous meals.

- Students with unpaid meal charges will not be required to do chores or work as a means of paying for one or more meals, or as punishment for not paying for one or more meals.
- Staff will not require a student to throw away a meal after it has been served to the student.
- Staff will not refuse a meal to a student as a form of disciplinary action.

PROHIBITION ON FOOD SHAMING AND STIGMATIZATION

The school will not openly identify, differentiate, or otherwise stigmatize a student who has payments due for previous meals.

- Staff will not openly identify or stigmatize any student in line for a meal or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of other students.
- Staff communication about a student’s meal debts must be made to the parent/guardian of the student rather than directly to the student, except that if a student asks about their

meal debt, staff may answer the student's inquiry. Staff may ask a student to carry to their parent/guardian a letter regarding the student's meal debt.

NOTIFICATION AND COLLECTION OF UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

Schools will not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid meal charges.

School staff will notify a student's parent/guardian by phone or email that the student has accrued meal/a la carte charges when their account has reached a negative balance.

School staff will offer assistance with completion of the application for free and reduced price meals (if application is required by law or regulations) to determine if there are other issues within the household resulting in the child having insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

A second attempt will be made if the balance remains outstanding after 14 days of the first notification with a follow up in writing.

If the balance remains outstanding after 30 days of the second attempt, the school will work with the parent/guardian to develop a plan. If the balance continues to remain outstanding, school staff will follow such guidelines as may be developed by the Maine Department of Education for the collection of student meal debt, or take such action as deemed appropriate within the limits of applicable law and/or regulations.

Legal Reference:

20-A MRSA § 6681

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