

# **Anoka-Hennepin Schools**

## **Child Nutrition Program**

### **Unpaid Meal Account Charges and Debt Collection Procedures**

#### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this procedure is to establish consistent district practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their meal accounts and the collection of unpaid meal debt.

#### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF PROCEDURES**

- A. Anoka-Hennepin's goal is to provide nutritious meals to students, to promote healthy eating habits and enhance learning, as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs, and eliminate the stigmatization of children in the cafeteria who may be unable to pay for a meal.
- B. Anoka-Hennepin Schools offer breakfast and lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines to all students regardless of an unpaid meal account balance.
- C. The purchase of school meals is set up through a prepaid meal system. Families are required to have funds deposited into school meal accounts in order for students to purchase meals.
  - i. Students who qualify for "paid" meals (not free or reduced-eligible) may purchase meals when funds have been deposited into their family accounts either online or by cash or check payment.
  - ii. Our district strives to ensure that nutritious meals are available to all students, but must insist that a student's prepaid meal account be kept up to date in order to avoid formal collection procedures.
- D. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are available to all families in the school/district prior to the start of the school year. In addition, applications are available online at [www.ahschools.us/freereduced](http://www.ahschools.us/freereduced) after August 14, 2017 or paper copies are available by calling the Child Nutrition office at (763) 506-1240. If household income or size changes, families can reapply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

#### **III. CHARGE MEAL PROCEDURES**

- A. It is Anoka-Hennepin's procedure that if the student account has insufficient funds to pay for breakfast and/or lunch meals, a student will still be allowed to purchase a meal, which will cause the account balance to become negative.
  - i. All students will be provided a meal regardless of meal account status. While the district is under no legal obligation to do so, we believe that this is in the best interest of the student.

- ii. Students are not allowed to charge ala carte items. Students with negative balances of \$25.00 or more, that have cash in hand, will not be able to purchase a la carte items except for milk or a small bottle of water.

#### **IV. NOTIFICATION OF ACCOUNT STATUS**

- A. Anoka-Hennepin utilizes several methods to notify households of negative meal balances:
  - i. Families can check their student's meal account balance and purchases when logged in to AH-Connect, by choosing SchoolMealAccount.
  - ii. The Child Nutrition Department will send a weekly e-mail and phone call to all parents advising them of their students' meal account balance(s) that are below \$5.00 or have a negative balance.
  - iii. The Child Nutrition Department will send a monthly letter to families for their students' account(s) that owe \$25.00 or more.
  - iv. The Child Nutrition Department will encourage all parents to complete the free/reduced-price meal application each school year to assist with meal accounts.

#### **V. COLLECTION OF UNPAID MEAL DEBT**

- A. Families that have received negative balance letters twice in 60 days and have failed to set up a payment plan for an account owing more than \$50.00 will be sent to the districts' collection agency for collection of the delinquent meal account balance.

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