

## **Nutrition Program Charges Policy**

### Reference(s):

- Utah State Board of Education “Model Policy Recommendations Regarding Child Nutrition Program Charges”

### I. PURPOSE

- A. National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs are federal programs in which East Hollywood High School participates. Pricing policies for school meals are determined at the local level, including decisions about whether or not to extend credit to parents who do not have meal money in their students’ accounts or whether or not to provide alternate meals to such students.
- B. Schools receive partial reimbursement for meals served to students who do not qualify for free meals. Parents must make payments to a student’s account to make up the difference between the federal reimbursement and the cost of the meal. This policy applies only to school meal payments, not a la carte sales.
- C. If students qualify for free or reduced-price school lunch, their meals are reimbursed in whole or in part with federal funds. Otherwise, the meal reimbursement is minimal and parents are expected to pay for their student(s)’ meals. Schools should adopt policies which minimize unpaid accounts and ensure students are not subject to punishment or stigmatization when parents fail to make school meal payments.
- D. The purpose of this policy is to explain how East Hollywood High School will notify parents/guardians about: money owed for student meals; of the school’s procedures for providing meals if student’s accounts are delinquent; and to assure and remind parents and school employees that students will never be confronted or embarrassed about money owed for school meals.

### II. GOALS

- A. The Goals of East Hollywood High School are:
  1. To maintain a positive experience for students during meal service.
  2. To treat all students with dignity and respect.
  3. To establish practices which are age-appropriate.
  4. To minimize meal charges and encourage parents to pre-pay for all meals.
  5. To promote parent’s responsibility for meal payment and self-responsibility for the student.

### III. DEFINITIONS

- A. “Alternate Meal” means a meal served to students that is different than the meals served to other students because the student does not have adequate funds in the student’s lunch account. The alternative meal, such as a sandwich and milk, allows the student to have something to eat while limiting the cost to the school lunch program. The LEA or the school determines the components of the alternate meal. In most cases, an alternate meal does not meet the USDA requirements and may not be claimed for reimbursement. The cost to provide this meal is not an allowable cost to the food program and must be paid for from non-federal funds.

- B. “Automated Meal Payment System” means a web based system which allows parents to deposit funds in students’ meal accounts, informs parents of account balances and student meal payments and sends messages to the parent when funds in the account are low. Some systems allow parents to control the use of the funds (i.e., allow the parents to choose if the funds can be used for reimbursable meals only or if they may also be used for the purchase of a la carte or vending items).
- C. “Collection Efforts” means a collection agency or other means that an LEA uses to collect delinquent lunch balances or contacts to parents by phone, mail, or other efforts to recoup unpaid meal balances. **East Hollywood may not withhold student records for unpaid school meal balances.**
- D. “Delinquent Account” Means a student’s meal fund account that does not have adequate funds to cover the meal charges by student/parent. School nutrition programs are responsible for the collection of funds in advance of the meal being served, but the school has the responsibility for the collection of delinquent accounts, if they are allowed.
- E. “Free Meal” means a meal served to a student whose parents have qualified, based on federal standards, for the free meals. The free meal receives the highest federal rate of reimbursement. The meal is served at no cost to the student.
- F. “LEA” means a local education agency, including local school boards/public school districts and charter schools.
- G. “Meal Charging” means allowing students who do not have funds in their accounts to receive a reimbursable meal, with parents or other sources paying for these meals at a later time. Schools are not required by state or federal law to provide meals to students who do not have the funds to pay for the meal.
- H. “Parent” means a student’s parent, legal guardian, or person acting as the parent for school purposes.
- I. “Paid Meal” means a meal served to a student whose parents have not qualified for reduced-price or free meals. This meal receives the lowest amount of federal reimbursement. The parent must pay the lunch price established by the local school board.
- J. “Point of Service” means the place at the end of the line where meal payments and counting of reimbursable meals occurs. By regulation, this must be at the end of the meal line, but schools may obtain an exception if they wish to have the point of service at the beginning of the line. Schools must have an adult at the end of the line to assure the meals selected by students meet the requirements and are reimbursable from the USDA.
- K. “Reduced-Price Meal” means a meal served to a student whose parents qualify (following income review and documentation) for reduced-price meals. The federal rate of reimbursement for a reduced-price meal is less than for a free meal, but more than for a paid meal. The parent must pay \$.40/lunch and \$.30/breakfast (schools may charge less than these amounts, but may not charge more and only the set amount is reimbursable to the LEA/school).

- L. "Reimbursable Meal" means a meal that meets the USDA requirements and may be claimed for payment from USDA.

#### IV. MEAL PRICING AND APPLICATION FOR FREE/REDUCED-PRICE MEALS

- A. Before school begins, parents shall receive information from East Hollywood High School:
  - 1. About school meals;
  - 2. Stating the prices for the meals;
  - 3. Informing parents how they may provide payment for meals;
  - 4. Informing parents how their students qualify for reduced-price or free meals;
  - 5. Informing parents what students will receive if their meal accounts are delinquent; and
  - 6. Informing parents of the policy for delinquent accounts.
- B. East Hollywood will send reminders of the policy throughout the school year. Schools may send letters home, send school newsletter reminders, make announcements, make phone calls or use other reasonable and effective means of communication contact parents.
- C. East Hollywood shall notify parents of the designated meal prices at the time of their student(s') registration. Accompanying the information about the prices of school meals, parents will receive an application for free and reduced-price meals. East Hollywood will provide paper applications for parents who do not have access to on-line forms. Parents will have continual access to this information and the application via the school website.
- D. If the student's family receives benefits from the Special Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Family Employment Program (FEP) or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), the household qualifies for meals at no charge, once the school receives notice of student's or family's eligibility, and does not have to compete or submit a free/reduced-price form. East Hollywood will send the household an e-mail/letter informing parents of student(s') eligibility for free meals. If a parent or family qualifies under one of these programs and has not received such a letter before school starts, the parent should contact the East Hollywood High School registrar.

#### V. PAYMENTS AND SCHOOL VERIFICATION

- A. An East Hollywood High School staff member will verify that each student's reimbursable or non-reimbursable at the time of meal service.
- B. EHHS will credit meal payments from parents to the student's account before the meal period. This assures all funds are accurately applied to meal accounts in advance of students selecting school meals. Schools will apply payments to the purchase of the current day's meal first, and the payment of past due accounts second.
- C. If a student/family qualifies for free meals, no payments are due.
- D. If a family qualifies for reduced-price meals, the school will charge no more than \$.40 for lunch and \$.30 for breakfast. East Hollywood sets the price for reduced-price meals.

- E. Parent payment options for student meals may include:
1. Parents may make on-line payments, using debit or credit cards, for one or all of their students, allocating funds to individual students' accounts. East Hollywood may add additional fees for the use of a credit card and will notify parents of added fees.
  2. Parents may make payments to the school by mail or hand delivery. Payments should clearly indicate the account to which the funds should be credited (student's name and amount, if several students attend the school). East Hollywood accepts checks and/or cash. (Parents should note the school policy for checks returned to the school for insufficient funds).
- F. Identification of Delinquent Accounts
1. East Hollywood will identify family or student accounts that do not have adequate balances to pay for student meals. EHHS will identify these accounts weekly and notify parents by Wednesday at 5 pm of each week during the school year. The school will contact the parents, by phone, text or e-mail. East Hollywood may ask students to take notifications addressed to the parent home with them; however, the school staff members may not tell students to "remind" their parents to send money to the school. It is the parent's responsibility to pay the student's account.
  2. The students will be contacted in advance of the meal service, if East Hollywood does not have payment from the parents, to tell the student what the action the school will take. East Hollywood will take such actions as directly and sensitively as possible so as not to embarrass the student.
  3. East Hollywood may use any of the following options (or other reasonable options) for student meals if a student's meal account is inadequate:
    - a) Students may bring a meal from home.
    - b) EHHS may continue to provide full meals to students and notify parents that the school will use collection efforts to pay for meals. East Hollywood shall maintain documentation of parent notice.
    - c) Once a student's account becomes \$20 or more delinquent, East Hollywood staff may inform students that students cannot choose a school meal because accounts are delinquent.

## VI. DELINQUENT BALANCES AND SCHOOL PROCEDURES

- A. East Hollywood will notify parents of students with delinquent balances in their school lunch accounts by such methods as:
1. The automated school lunch payment system;
  2. E-mail or phone text to the parent;
  3. Written notice sent to the parent by mail or carried home by the student in a sealed envelope;
  4. Telephone conversations with the parent.
- B. If parents have been notified, no payment is received, and the amount owed exceeds \$20, the account may be turned over to a collection agency. East Hollywood will notify parents at least twice annually concerning their procedures for the collection of past-due accounts.

- C. If a student repeatedly has no money in the student's lunch account and no student meals are provided from home, school officials will consider the circumstances in the home (e.g., potential abuse or neglect, homelessness, etc.) and may contact the school social worker and/or Child Protective Services.
  
- D. East Hollywood High School may use collection agencies to collect on delinquent accounts. EHHS may also set aside or raise funds, which may be used for payment of delinquent accounts. East Hollywood will determine and notify all parents of the school's standards for paying for students' lunches with school discretionary funds and/or using collection agencies.