

Adopted: 2023

Updated: 2026/2027

Tri-County School District

Meal Charge Policy

Purpose

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

General Statement of Policy

1. Tri-County School Districts 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 program and eliminate stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges.
2. It is the procedure of Tri-County School District to offer breakfast and lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
3. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. The application for benefits is available in the school office or on the Tri-County School website under school lunches (Linq). If household income or size changes, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.
4. Tri-County School District will maintain dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student.
5. Alternate meals may not be provided to students as a result of school lunch debt. Providing an alternate meal not on the scheduled menu violates a Minnesota law (Minn.Statute 124D.11, subdivision 5(2022) <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/124D.111> that requires respectful treatment of students regarding school lunch debt.

Charge Policy

1. The Tri-County School District meal payment procedure: There will be no charging of beverage or food items. All accounts must maintain a positive balance for purchases. Payment on student meal accounts can be made online through the school website by clicking on the "School Lunches (Linq) tab. Application for Educational Benefits (free and reduced meals may be applied for online through the school website as well. Payments of cash or check will be accepted in person to the Food Service Director or main office.
2. The handling of unpaid meal account balances is addressed under "Notification of Account Balances".
3. Once staff have placed a meal on a tray or otherwise served the meal to a student, the meal may not be withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school staff whether or not the student has an outstanding meal balance.
4. All students will always be served a meal regardless of unpaid food service accounts. A student who has been determined eligible for free or reduced-priced meals must always be served a reimbursable meal even if the student has an outstanding debt.
5. When a student eligible for PAID meals has "cash in hand" to pay for a meal, the student will be served a meal regardless of unpaid foodservice accounts. The "cash in hand" will not be applied towards past due balances.

Notification of Account Status and Collection of Unpaid Debt

1. Any reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances do not demean or stigmatize any child participating in the school lunch program, including but not limited to dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, announcing or listing students names publicly, or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.
2. Meal accounts are available in the following ways:
 - a. Families can check their students meal account balance via school website by setting up an account through the (Linq) tab.
 - b. The food Service Director will send out weekly e-mail or snail mail to all parents advising them of the student balances that are negative.
 - c. Households with negative meal account balances will receive weekly call/text.
 - d. When a household reaches \$75.00 in unpaid meal debt a letter is sent signed by superintendent.

- e. Food Service Department will encourage all parents to complete the Application for Educational Benefits.
- f. NSF Checks will follow the district "bad check" policy.
- g. The school district may enlist the help of a collection agency to collect unpaid meal debt.

Tri-County School District

Reimbursable Meal Policy

Purpose

To assure that students, parents and staff are informed of the Offer Versus Serve guidelines and the guidelines are implemented correctly.

General Statement of Policy

1. Tri-County School implements the Offer VS Serve meal program. This program allows students to make personal food choices with healthy options.
2. The Food Service Director is responsible for training of all staff or subs who work with Tri-County Food Service.
3. The Food Service Director is responsible for assuring that all staff in food service are trained to identify reimbursable meals and that the POS takes appropriate action to guide students who may not have a reimbursable meal.

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Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged

discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- (1) **mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) **email:** program.intake@usda.gov

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