

Policy Information

Series 4000 - Non-Instructional/Business Operation

Meal Charging and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming

Policy # 4570

POLICY

2018

4570

Non-Instructional/Business
Operations
Genesee Valley BOCES

SUBJECT: MEAL CHARGING AND PROHIBITION AGAINST MEAL SHAMING

It is the BOCES and participating Districts' goal to provide students with access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a student whose parent/guardian has unpaid meal charges is not shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal charges.

Unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the BOCES and participating Districts;. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed, or embarrassed.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the BOCES in a way that does not stigmatize, distress, or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch and snack meals only. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

Access to Meals

- a. Free meal benefit eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.
- b. Reduced meal benefit eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice for \$.25 and lunch of their choice for \$.25 each day. A student will be allowed to charge 5 meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.
- c. Full pay students will pay for meals at the BOCES and the participating Districts published paid meal rate each day. A student will be allowed to charge a maximum of 5 meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Ongoing Staff Training

- a. Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed by the School Lunch Managers on the procedures for managing meal charges using the State Education Department (SED) Webinars, training materials or the District/BOCES training program. The School Lunch Manager will monitor and

observe the checkout process to ensure compliance throughout the year.

b. Staff training will include ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

Parent Notification

a. Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted within 14 days and then every 2 weeks thereafter.

b. Parents/guardians will be notified that a student has accrued unpaid meal charges within 10 days of the charge and then every 2 weeks thereafter.

Parent Outreach

a. Staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more unpaid meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

b. Staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.

c. Staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the student to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

Minimizing Student Distress

a. Staff will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student in line for a meal or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.

b. Students with unpaid meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or other work to pay for meals.

c. Staff will not throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous unpaid meal charges.

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

e. Staff will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid meal charges.

Ongoing Eligibility Certification

a. Staff will conduct direct certification through the New York Student Identification System (NYSSIS) or using the SED Roster Upload at least monthly to maximize free eligibility.

b. Staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in the school enrollment packet.

c. If the BOCES/District uses an electronic meal application, it will provide an explanation of the process in the school enrollment packet and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost.

d. The BOCES/District will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.

e. The BOCES/District will use its administrative prerogative to complete an application on a student's behalf judiciously, and only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the

student's parent/guardian. The BOCES/District will complete the application using only available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.

f. The BOCES/District will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, and runaway coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students.

Prepaid Accounts

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via www.MySchoolBucks.com or with a check payable to Genesee Valley BOCES. Further details are available on the schools webpages. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a student may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student will be carried over to the next school year.

To obtain a refund for a withdrawn or graduating student, a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in the student's account must be submitted. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer any remaining money to a sibling's account through a written request.

Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Genesee Valley BOCES Regional Food Service Program.

This policy is intended for the BOCES and the following School Districts who participate in the Genesee Valley BOCES Regional Food Service Program. Included are the following:

	NAME	LEA CODE
SFA	Genesee Valley BOCES	249000000000
RA	Alexander CSD	180202040000
RA	Alexander Elementary School	180202040002
RA	BOCES Genesee Valley Batavia Campus	249000000002
RA	Genesee Valley BOCES – Mt. Morris Campus	249000000009
RA	Wyoming CSD	671002040001

Genesee Valley BOCES

Adoption Date

08/15/18

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