



# CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM



## 2019-20 UNPAID MEAL CHARGE POLICY

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are integral in ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals to support their academic success. It is also imperative to protect the financial stability of school nutrition program. The intent of this policy is to establish a process and procedure to handle situations when children eligible for reduced-price or full-price meal benefits have insufficient funds to pay for school meals; as well as for the collection of unpaid meal charges and delinquent account debt:

- Students who qualify for free meals will not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance on their cafeteria account.
- Students who have money to pay for a reduced-price or full price meal at the time of service must be provided a meal. If the student intended to use the money for that day's meal, the School Food Authority (SFA) will not use the money to repay a negative balance or other unpaid meal charge debt.
- Students without funds to pay for a reduced-price or full price meal are allowed to charge breakfast or lunch.
- Students are allowed to charge up to \$12.50.
- À la carte items may not be charged for any reason.
- Students who charge a meal will receive a reimbursable meal.
- Employees of Elmore County Public Schools are **NOT** allowed to charge a meal.
- Guests/Visitors of Elmore County Public Schools are **NOT** allowed to charge a meal.

### **Communicating the Policy**

- The unpaid meal charges policy will be posted on the Elmore County Public Schools website, will be included in the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) information packet distributed at the beginning of the school year and will be provided to all transfer students during the school year. The Household Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals will be attached as well.
- The unpaid meal charges policy will be communicated to all faculty and staff prior to the first day of school.
- Child Nutrition Program staff will receive training on the unpaid meal charges policy and a record of the training will be maintained as part of the professional development portfolio.

### **Notification of Negative Balance**

- The Child Nutrition Program (CNP) staff will notify households of negative balances. The Cafeteria Manager or designee will be responsible for contacting households via telephone, by US mail or by sending a letter home with the student.
- Written notifications to households will include the amount of unpaid meal charges, expected payment dates, the consequences of non-payment and where to go for questions or assistance. Written notifications will be sent home on a weekly basis with each student whose account has a negative balance.

### **Assistance to Households**

- Households with questions or needing assistance may contact the Child Nutrition Program office at: (334) 567-1222, 100 H.H. Robison Drive, Wetumpka 36092, or email the CNP Director at [ElmoreCNP@elmoreco.com](mailto:ElmoreCNP@elmoreco.com)

### **Bad Debt**

- Bad debt is defined as delinquent debt that is deemed uncollectible at the end of the school year. Bad debt is unallowable in the Child Nutrition Program and cannot be carried over to the next school year. Funds resulting from bad debt cannot be recovered using CNP funds or the District's general fund. Bad debt must be paid using non-public funding sources.
- Bad debt must be restored to the CNP account prior to the end of the same fiscal year.
- When a household has reached the \$12.50 limit, collection procedures will be initiated.
- CNP staff will send a letter to the household with the amount of debt and date of expected payment.
- If payment or arrangements to pay have not been satisfied, CNP staff will report the debt to school administration. The school administration will contact the household and attempt to collect the debt.
- If payment is not received and/or if a parent regularly fails to provide meal money or send food to school with the student and the student does not qualify for free or reduced benefits the Cafeteria Manager will inform the principal, who will determine the next course of action, which may include notifying the department of social services of suspected child neglect and/or taking legal steps to recover the unpaid meal charges.