

Whitehall Central School District 2019-2020
Meal Charge and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Policy

Purpose:

The goal of the Whitehall Central School District (WCSD) is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. The purpose of this policy is to insure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program and, 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 WCSD 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. The WCSD provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

I. Policy

Free Meal Benefit - Free 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.

Reduced Meal Benefit -

Beginning July 1, 2019, students approved for reduced price meals must receive a reimbursable breakfast and lunch at no charge. New York State funding will provide an additional .25 cents in state reimbursement for each breakfast and lunch meal served to a reduced price student to cover the cost previously paid by the student.

A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Full Pay Students - Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. **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 the school to withhold a meal.**

A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

ONGOING STAFF TRAINING:

- All Food Service Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the NYSED Webinar or the school's training program.
- Staff training includes ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

PARENT NOTIFICATION:

- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's meal account balance is exhausted within three (3) days and then every week thereafter.
- The Food Service Director will generate negative balance lists weekly and update parents on any negative balances.

PARENT OUTREACH:

- The Food Service Director will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.
- The Food Service Director 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.
- The Food Service Director or the District's Social Worker 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 child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

- School will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- Students who incur meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or hand stamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.
- Schools 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 meal charges.
- Schools will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.
- Schools will not use a debt collector to satisfy debts.

ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

- The Food Service Director will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload at least monthly to maximize free eligibility.
- The Food Service Director will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet.
- The Food Service Director will provide a paper application (at no cost) to all families prior to the beginning of the school year.
- The Food Service Director will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.
- The Food Service Director will use administrative prerogative judiciously, only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the parent/guardian only with available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.
- The Food Service Director will coordinate with the District's Social Worker regarding foster, homeless, migrant, runaway at least monthly to certify eligible students.

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

Refunds for withdrawn, and graduating students; a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer to a sibling's account with a written request.

Unclaimed Funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the WCSD Food Service Program.

ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- * The Food service Director will provide a 30 day carryover of eligibility for free and reduced priced students from the previous school year during the first thirty (30) operating days of a new school year , or until a new eligibility determination is made.
- * Students transferring from Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or provision 2 (P2) participating school to a non-participating school will be provided with thirty (30) days free eligibility or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first.
- * The Food Service Directors will accept free and reduced price eligibility from transfer students.
- * The Food Service Directors will maximize the use of CEP and P2 where appropriate.

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Nondiscrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter 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;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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