

Policy 0701.15 School Meal Charge

The District firmly believes in providing nourishment and support to all students in our care. One of the primary goals of the District's nutrition program is to ensure that no student goes hungry while they are on the school's premises. As part of the commitment to student well-being, it is the policy of the Board to:

1. Feed All Students:

- a. Every student who enters our meal lines will be provided with a nutritious meal, regardless of their ability to pay or any outstanding meal charges.
- b. The District recognizes that hunger can affect a student's ability to learn and thrive, and we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all students.

2. Parental Responsibility:

- a. Parents/Legal Guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child's meal charges are paid promptly.
- b. Charges may include unpaid meal balances, purchases of extra items, or charges incurred during special events involving meals.

3. Communication and Notification:

- a. The District will communicate the school meal charge policy to parents and legal guardians at the beginning of each school year through informational materials such as school handbooks, and the District/School websites.
- b. Reminders may be sent periodically to inform parents/legal guardians of any outstanding meal charges and how to apply for free or reduced meals.

4. Confidentiality and Dignity:

- a. The District understands that financial circumstances can vary for each family. All information regarding meal charges, including outstanding balances and or qualification for free or reduced meals, will be treated confidentially and with the utmost sensitivity.
- b. Students will not be publicly identified or stigmatized for unpaid meal charges.

5. Payment Options:

- a. Parents or legal guardians have the following options to pay for meal charge
 - i. Online payment portals. Parents/legal guardians can conveniently make payments through the District's designated online payment system. Information is located on the School Nutrition Tab of the West Ada School District Website.
 - ii. Cash or check. Payments can be submitted to the school office or cafeteria cashier in a sealed envelope with the student's name and ID number clearly marked. Payments can also be made in person at the District Service Center.
 - iii. Payment Plans/Assistance Programs. Parents or legal guardians facing financial hardship may contact the District's Nutrition Services at the District Service Center to discuss possible payment arrangements or available assistance programs. Families who are suffering from such financial hardships are also encouraged to communicate with their student's assigned school counselor.

6. Outstanding Meal Charges:

- a. If a student has outstanding meal charges, the District will make reasonable efforts to contact the parents or legal guardians to resolve the matter.
- b. Parents will receive regular notifications regarding the status of their child's meal account, including outstanding balances.

7. Collection and Delinquency:

- a. In the event that meal charges remain unpaid after reasonable attempts to resolve the issue, the District reserves the right to employ appropriate collection measures, as permitted by state and federal regulations.
- b. Collection measures that may be implemented by the District include, but are not necessarily limited to: contact collection agencies or pursuing legal action, with the understanding that efforts will be made to avoid these recourse options.

By implementing this policy, the District aims to ensure that all students receive the nutrition they need to succeed academically and to maintain their well-being. We encourage open communication between parents/legal guardians, school staff, and administrators to address any concerns or difficulties relating to meal charges, with the goal of supporting each student's access to nutritious meals.

The District is an equal-opportunity provider.

Legal References: Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, USDA Civil Rights Regulations and Policies