

## **INSUFFICIENT FUNDS FOR SCHOOL MEALS**

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are integral in ensuring that students have access to nutritious school meals to fuel their academic success. The term “school meal,” is defined according to the USDA Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act of 2010. It is also imperative that the Albemarle County Public Schools (“ACPS”) protect the financial stability of its school nutrition programs.

This policy addresses the general process in handling student meal accounts, including:

- situations in which an ACPS student eligible for full- price or reduced-price meal benefits have insufficient funds to pay for school meals;
- notification and collection of unpaid meal account debt; and the
- school meal account refund process.

A meal charge is defined as a short-term loan that will allow a student who does not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service to eat. This would apply to students of full price and reduced-price meal status or employees with meal accounts. The school nutrition program is self-sustaining and relies on revenue generated from meals that are served. Therefore, charges must be kept to a minimum. School nutrition funds may not be used to offset meal charges. It is, ultimately, the responsibility of the parent/guardian of the student to keep up-to-date as to the status of the student’s meal account. Student meal account status is available on the ACPS Parent Portal, the online meal account systems, or by contacting the school cafeteria. The parent/guardian is expected to keep their contact information current within the student information system at the school and to pay any charges that accrue to the student’s account. ACPS employees with meal accounts are also responsible to keep current on their meal account status and make timely payments.

Students who have insufficient funds to purchase a school meal will be allowed to charge the school meal to their respective accounts.

Students will not be allowed to charge a la carte items with the exception of individual meal components. A parent/guardian should discuss preferred purchasing choices with the child. If a student does not have adequate funds in their account and comes to the register with an individual meal component item(s), the item will be charged to their account.

Students will never be made to work for their meals to settle any unpaid meal debt. In addition, students will not be labeled verbally or physically with a hand stamp, sticker, wristband, or identified in any other way if they cannot pay for a meal or have unpaid meal debt. Neither the School Board nor any employee of the Board denies any student the opportunity to participate in any extracurricular activity because the student cannot pay for a meal at school or owes a school debt.

The parent/guardian is responsible for reconciling their child’s meal account when withdrawing from the ACPS. Accounts with negative balances must be paid at any school cafeteria. The parent/guardian can request a refund for money remaining on the meal account by completing a

prepayment refund request form that is available at all school cafeterias. After thirty (30) days, unclaimed funds will become the property of the ACPS Child Nutrition Department.

The School Nutrition Program, using a computerized school nutrition accounting system, will allow and record charges, collect monies for payment of charges, and issue charge notices. Communications regarding meal debt shall be directed to parents/guardians, rather than students. The School Board does not file lawsuits against a student or the student's parent because the student cannot pay for a meal at school or owes a school debt.

Adopted: August 8, 2019

Amended: August 12, 2021; October 13, 2022

Equity Review: August 8, 2019; August 12, 2021; October 13, 2022

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Legal Refs: 2 CFR Part 200 Section 143 of the Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act of 2010  
 Code of Virginia 22.1-79.7  
 USDA Memo SP 57-2016  
 USDA Memo SP47-2016  
 VDOE Superintendent's Memo #070-17  
 VDOE Superintendents' Memo # 201-18

Cross Refs: EF, *Child Nutrition Program Management*  
 EFA, *Food Purchasing*  
 EFB, *Free and Reduced-Price Meal Program*  
 EFC, *Competitive Food Sales*