

8505 MEAL CHARGING AND PROHIBITION AGAINST SHAMING

I. Purpose

The goal of the *Croton-Harmon UFSD* is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a student whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a student 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 *Croton-Harmon UFSD* in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast & lunch meals only. The *Croton-Harmon UFSD* 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.

II. Policy

Free Meal Benefit - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast, providing the district is approved for the national breakfast program, and lunch meal of their choice each day. 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:

- 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 card or account balance is exhausted and has accrued meal charges within 15 days of the charge and then every 15 days thereafter.

PARENT OUTREACH:

- School staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- School 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 child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

- School and Food Service Management Company (FSMC) staff 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 handstamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.
- The District 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.
- The District schools will not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- The District schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees. However, the district may discreetly notify students of their account balances, and why certain items (e.g., à la carte, etc.) could not be provided with charged meals.

ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

- School staff will conduct direct certification with the New York State Student Identification System (NYSSIS) or using

NYSED Roster Upload periodically to maximize free eligibility. NYSED provides updated direct certification data monthly.

- School staff will provide parents/guardians with an application for their child(ren) to receive free and reduced priced meals and instructions at the beginning of each school year in the school enrollment packet.
- Schools using electronic meal application will provide an explanation of the process in the school enrollment packet and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost.
- Schools will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.
- Schools 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.
- Schools will coordinate with the district's liaison for homeless children and youth (the McKinney-Vento liaison) to certify eligible students and to make sure such students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law and Board policy. A homeless child or unaccompanied youth shall not be required to complete an application for free or reduced meals as a precondition for provision of such meals.

Students/Parents/Guardians are expected to pay for meals in advance via www.MySchoolBucks.com or with a check payable to *Croton-Harmon UFSD*. Information as to the manner in which payments may be made will be available on the district website and from each school office. 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 at the end of the school year will be carried over to the next school year prior to graduation.

Refunds of account balances for students who have withdrawn or graduated will be provided upon receipt by the district of a written or e-mailed request for a refund. Parents/guardians of students who are graduating will be given the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account upon submission of a written or emailed request.

Account balances must be requested within one school year of the withdrawal or graduation of a student. Unclaimed funds that are not requested after one school year will then become the property of the *Croton-Harmon UFSD* Food Service Program.

Outstanding student charges (also called delinquent debt) resulting from nonpayment for school meals is not an allowable cost to the nonprofit school food service account and cannot be absorbed by the School Nutrition Program at the end of the school year or carried forward to the next school year. If the District allows students to accumulate charges and those charges are not paid, the school must subsidize the nonprofit school food service account for all unpaid meals by June 30th of each year. The subsidy must be from the general or other non-federal source.

Cross-ref.

5151. Homeless Children

Ref:

[NYS Education Law 908](#) as added by Section 2 of Part B of Chapter 56 of the laws of 2018

[42 USC §1779](#) (Child Nutrition Act of 1966);

[42 USC §§1758\(f\)\(1\); 1766\(a\)](#) (National School Lunch Act)

Adoption date: August 1, 2019

Croton-Harmon Schools
