

Policy Category: Student and Student Services  
Policy Heading: Unpaid Meal Charge Policy  
Policy Title: Unpaid Meal Charge Policy

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent meal account procedures in the food service program at Christ-St. John's Lutheran School. All children, in grades 3K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, participating in the National School Lunch Program, whether free, reduced or paid status, will receive a full reimbursable lunch meal that meets USDA requirements regardless if they do not have adequate funds in their food service account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of service. It is the parents and/or guardian's responsibility to insure their child has sufficient funds in their food service account to cover all school meals and milk purchases and to actively monitor and manage their child's food service account. In order to help parents meet their responsibilities regarding their child's food service account, Christ-St. John's Lutheran School has established the following guidelines regarding meal charges and student access to food at school.

**Responsibilities:**

- a. The school food service program is responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying parents or guardians of outstanding school food service program balances through our school management system called FastDirect Communications. Approximately three weeks prior to the start of school, all families will be given the Meal Charge Policy in their back to school information packet that also includes a Free and Reduced Meal Application.
- b. The Principal will be responsible for working with the Food Service Director to obtain free/reduced applications for students exhibiting financial hardships.
- c. The parent or guardian will be responsible for immediate payment on food service accounts that are above the designated \$20.00 charge limit per family account. The parent or guardian is also responsible for monitoring and managing their child's food service account.

**General Information Regarding Policy:**

- a. Students who qualify for free meals will not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance in their food service account.
- b. Students who qualify for reduced price meals will not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance in their food service account.

- c. Students who pay for full priced meals at the time of service will be provided a meal regardless if they currently have a negative balance in their food service account.
- d. Students without funds to pay for a reduced price or full price meal will be allowed to charge up to \$20.00 in their food service family account. Students who charge a meal will receive a reimbursable meal.
- e. Food service payments may be made to the family food service account by bringing a check or cash to the school office.
- f. Families experiencing financial difficulties are encouraged to contact the school office at 608-786-1250 to make arrangements for the continuation of meal service. Free and reduced meal application forms are available in the school office.

**Communication:**

- a. The written Meal Charge Policy will be distributed to each household in their back to school information packet which will be distributed during the teacher and family home visit prior to the start of school. The policy will also be available on the Christ-St. John's school website in the Cougar Café section, given to all transfer and new students during the school year, included in the Board of Christian Education policies and procedures, and attached to the Free and Reduced Meal Application.
- b. The written Meal Charge Policy will also be sent out prior to the start of the school year through our school management system FastDirect Communications.
- c. School food service staff will receive training on the Meal Charge Policy and record of training will be maintained per DPI requirements.
- d. Documentation of the communication and training plan will be maintained for the DPI Administrative Review.

**Notification of Low or Negative Food Service Balance:**

- a. The student's family will begin receiving negative balance notices when the account is zero or below. This notification will be sent through the school management system FastDirect Communications.
- b. On a weekly basis the Food Service Director will send out a food service notice, through the use of our FastDirect Communication system, to families with a zero or negative balance in their food service account. All parents and guardians associated with any child on the account will receive notification of a zero or negative balance.
- c. Parents or guardian may access their meal account status and information in the parent portal of FastDirect Communications. If parents or guardians do not have access to their FastDirect account, they should contact the school office to request their user id and password information.
- d. Parents or guardians with questions or concerns regarding their food service account are encouraged to contact the school office.

### **Collection Procedures for Low or Negative Food Service Account:**

Once a student's account has a zero or negative balance, the Food Service Director will send out a notice through FastDirect Communications in an attempt to collect payment. Payment is due immediately upon notice. Families may discuss payment plan options. If a negative balance still has not been paid after the notice was sent, then:

- a. A food service statement will be mailed to the family.
- b. The Food Service Director will attempt to make a person-to-person telephone contact or schedule a meeting with the family responsible for payment.
- c. The Principal will attempt to make a person-to-person telephone contact to schedule a meeting with the family responsible for payment.
- d. The Board of Christian Education co-chairmen will attempt to make a person-to-person telephone contact to schedule a meeting with the family responsible for payment.
- e. Food service debt is not automatically forgiven or reduced at the end of the school year or due to a change in a student's enrollment status.
- f. Family accounts with outstanding balances are required to be paid in full by the last day of each school year.
- g. Reimbursable meals will continue to be served for a period of no more than 3 consecutive days.
- h. All food service notices will be copied to the Principal.

### **Additional Information and Assistance to Households:**

For assistance with all issues and questions related to Christ-St. John's food service program, including eligibility and applications for free or reduced-price meals, student food service accounts, payment methods, school management system (FastDirect Communications) as well as this policy, school families can contact the Food Service Director or the Office Administrator.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Approved: 2/26/2018