

I.S.D. #2155
Wadena-Deer Creek Schools
Unpaid Meal Charge and Debt Collection

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent district practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts and the collection of unpaid debt.

II. General Statement of Policy

- A. Wadena Deer Creek Schools' goal is to provide nutritious meals to students to promote healthy eating habits and enhance learning as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Breakfast and Lunch program and eliminate stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges.
- B. It is the policy of Wadena Deer Creek Schools to offer meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
- C. WDC accepts payments at all schools and on line accessible in the JMC Family portal
- D. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are distributed to all families in the district prior to the student's first day of classes. In addition, families can submit their applications online in the JMC family portal, paper applications are available in elementary, Middle/High School offices, food service office and will be mailed upon request, in addition they are available on the school website: www.wdc2155.k12.mn.us. If household income or size changes, families can re apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

III. Charge Policy

Because all breakfast and lunch meals to students are free, in order for us to offer free meals to students, the meal must be compliant with state and federal regulations, meaning that complete meal must be taken. Students cannot take just one or two items free of charge.

Ala Carte items are on a prepay basis and may not be charged to student accounts without funds to cover the cost. Students that bring a lunch from home and wish to purchase a carton of milk must have funds in their account or pay cash for it. This applies to all students, free, reduced or paid. Milk alone is an ala carte item, with a cost of \$0.50

- A. It is the procedure of Wadena Deer Creek School District to offer meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
- B. Wadena Deer Creek School District will maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student.
- C. The Wadena Deer Creek School District will not withdraw a meal from a student once a meal has been placed on a tray or has otherwise been served a meal regardless of outstanding meals balance.
- D. Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals will always be served a meal regardless of unpaid food service accounts.
- E. Alternate meals may not be provided to students as a result of school lunch debt. Providing an alternate meal not on the scheduled menu violates a Minnesota law ([Minn. Statute 124D.111, subdivision 5](http://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/124D.111) [2022] <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/124D.111>) that requires respectful treatment of students regarding school lunch debt.

IV. Notification of Account Status

- A. The parent/guardian will be notified if the household account reaches a negative balance each month.
- B. The method for notifying the parent/guardian of children in both the elementary and high school will be to send e-mails and texts to those who supply e-mail addresses and/or cell phone numbers to the offices.
- C. Statements may be sent to those with a negative balance each month.

V. Collection of Unpaid Meal Debt

When the student meal balance is negative, the following collection actions will be taken:

- A. The Food and Nutrition Director will assess each balance and facts surrounding the deficit, and contact the household to request payment.
- B. *The Food and Nutrition staff will contact the building principal if no payment is received. The principal will contact the parent/guardian to determine an appropriate solution and review with them their responsibility to provide payment for purchases made by their child(ren).*
- C. *Assistance from the county social services may be requested by the school if parents refuse to provide payment.*

- D. *A formal letter may be sent to the household notifying that the debt will be turned over to the collection agency and the student meal account will be closed.*
- E. *The expectation is all fees owed to the district will be paid in full on the last day the student will be attending classes*

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