

4.51— FOOD SERVICE PREPAYMENT

Meal Charges¹

Option 1: The district does not provide credit for students to charge for meals, a la carte, or other food and beverage items available for purchase in the school food service areas. Meals, a la carte, or other food and beverage items may be purchased by either providing payment for the items at the time of receipt or by having a prepaid account with the District that may be charged for the items. Parents, or students choosing to do so, may pay in advance for meals, a la carte, or other food and beverage items through any of the following methods:²

- Submitting cash or check payment at _____³;
- Depositing funds through the District’s online service;

*A student’s parents will be contacted by authorized District personnel regarding a student’s prepaid account balance at the following times :*⁴

Option 2: *The District participates in* _____⁵ and provides meals to all students at no charge. The District does not provide credit for students to charge for a la carte or other food and beverage items available for purchase in the school food service areas. A la carte or other food and beverage items may be purchased by either providing payment for the items at the time of receipt or by having a prepaid account with the District that may be charged for the items. Parents, or students choosing to do so, may pay in advance for a la carte or other food and beverage items through any of the following methods:²

- Submitting cash or check payment to _____³;
- Depositing funds through the District’s online service;

Alternative Meals⁶

Option A: The District does not provide alternative meals for students.

Option B: The District provides alternative meals at no cost to students whose accounts do not have enough funds to purchase a meal. Alternative meals are available during _____⁷. A student may select an alternative meal up to _____⁸ times in a school year. The District will notify a student’s parents when the student has:

- _____⁹ alternative meal options remaining in the school year; and
- No more alternative meals available for the school year.

The alternative meals provided to students are available as _____¹⁰. Students who have submitted proper documentation to receive a meal modification in accordance with Policy 4.50—SCHOOL MEAL MODIFICATIONS shall receive the same type of modification for an alternative meal.

Notes: This policy is similar to policy 7.17. If you change this policy, please review 7.17 at the same time to ensure applicable consistency between the two.

While districts have the option to allow students to charge for meals, a la carte items, and alternative meals, we have not provided any options that would allow students to do so because Chapter 3 of the federal Fair and Accurate Credit Transaction Act of 2007 (15 U.S.C. § 1681 *et seq.*), along with its accompanying regulations (16 C.F.R. part 681), requires “creditors” to

implement an Identity Theft Protection Program. We see the establishment and maintenance of an identity theft protection program to be a financial and potentially time-consuming burden. Districts can avoid this burden by not having practices deemed to make them “creditors”, such as through the language in this policy.

A copy of this policy must be communicated in writing at least once to all households at the start of each school year and to households of students who transfer to the school during the school year. Some suggestions on communication methods are to include a copy of the policy in:

- Student enrollment materials;
- Print versions of student handbooks; or
- Notification methods on applying for free or reduced price meals.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) does not consider providing a copy of this policy only in electronic format to satisfy the communication requirement.

A written copy of this policy must be provided to all staff responsible for policy enforcement.

This includes:

- A. School food service professionals;
- B. Staff involved in notifying families of low prepaid account balances;
- C. School social workers;
- D. School nurses; and
- E. The LEA homeless student liaison.

¹ While the options provided in this section are written as though they will apply to the district as a whole and that you will only need to select one option, the circumstances at your district may require you to select an option at the individual school level. As an example: if your elementary and middle school both participate in the USDA’s Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) while the high school is a traditional school, then you would need to adopt Option 2 for both the elementary and middle school and Option 1 for the high school.

² Insert the methods here that parents and students may use to put money into the student’s account. If you do not have an online method for parents to place money in a student’s account, then remove it from this list. If you have an online prepayment system, the USDA requires that an option for the parent or student to provide funds through a cash or check system continue to be provided as not all families may have easy access to the internet. In addition, if there are any fees associated with your online prepayment system, or any other prepayment system, that are not covered by the district, you are required to inform district parents of the fees.

³ Insert the place where parents and students may go to submit money for the student’s account. Examples include, but are not limited to: the district’s central office, the school’s central office, or the food service office.

⁴ Insert the times and method an authorized person will attempt to contact a student’s parents to inform them the student’s account is low. As an example, you may choose to have the parents be contacted by phone when the student’s account has five dollars (\$5) left and to send a letter along

with a copy of the policy if the student's account becomes empty. The goal is to try and prevent a student from showing up with too few funds to purchase a meal.

⁵ Insert the applicable USDA Special Assistance Provision. Examples include, but are not limited to, the USDA's CEP or Provision 2.

⁶ While the options provided in this section are written as though they will apply to the district as a whole and that you will only need to select one option, the circumstances at your district may require you to select an option at the individual school level. As an example: if your elementary and middle school both participate in USDA's CEP while the high school is a traditional school, then you should adopt Option A for both the elementary and middle school and could select either Option for the high school. You are not required to offer alternative meals to students but need to indicate in this policy whether or not you will. We included the option for alternative meals to provide a method to attempt to prevent a student from going hungry due to lack of funds because we did not include a method for students to charge for meals.

⁷ Insert the meal(s) where alternative meals will be provided.

⁸ Insert the number of times a student may receive an alternative meal in a school year due to the student not having payment in hand or enough funds in the prepaid account to purchase a reimbursable meal.

⁹ Insert a number of alternative meals remaining when you will contact a student's parents to inform them of the number of alternative meals the student is still eligible to receive during the school year. We recommend informing the parents when the student has received half of the total number of alternative meals the student is eligible to receive during the school year. While we have only included in the policy one time a student's parents will be notified as to how many alternative meals their student may receive before the student has used all of the student's alternative meals, you may add additional times the student's parents will be notified.

¹⁰ Insert the type of alternative meal(s) that will be available to students. While the traditional alternative meal is a sack lunch, our understanding is that districts may provide a traditional or low cost reimbursable meal at no cost to the student instead; providing the reimbursable meal a limited number of times per year to students who are otherwise unable to pay has the benefits of ensuring the student receives a healthy meal while removing any possible stigma from not being able to pay and receiving a noticeable sack lunch. For districts who provide the alternative meal as a sack lunch at no charge, the alternative meal provided is not required to meet the Federal Smart Snacks requirements or the Arkansas Nutrition Standards.

Legal References: Commissioner's Memo CNU-17-003
 Commissioner's Memo CNU-17-024

Date Adopted: 6/27/18

Last Revised: