

DOUGLAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CHARGE AND COLLECTION OF PAYMENT FOR SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

I. PURPOSE/POLICY:

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout the district. Unpaid charges place a financial strain on the food service department and eventually on the general fund budget. The goals of this policy are:

- To establish a consistent district policy regarding charges and collection of charges.
- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts.
- To support positive situations with district staff, district business policies, students and parent/guardians to the maximum extent possible.
- To establish policies that are age appropriate.
- To encourage parent/guardian to assume responsibility of meal payments

II. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY:

The Food Service Department: Responsible for maintaining charge records and notifying the School District (School Principals and Business Manager) of outstanding balances. The Food Service Department is also responsible for notifying the student's parent/guardian of outstanding balances.

The School District: Responsible for supporting the Food Service Department in collection activities.

The Parent/Guardian: Immediate payment.

III. ADMINISTRATION:

A la Carte items are not part of the USDA program and must be purchased separately. Students will not be allowed to charge a-la carte items. For example, second meals, snacks, and drinks are sold separately and may not be charged against a negative balance.

- No student will be denied access to a meal at breakfast or lunch.
- When Reduced and Paid Students have accumulated (3) or more meal charges their parent/guardian will be required to complete a new Free/Reduced Price meal application.

3. Balances Owed:

Balances may be checked at any time by logging into <https://www.myschoolbucks.com> system or by emailing the Food Service Director. All accounts must be paid by the end of the school year. In addition to the regular notices sent home during the school year, a balance due notice will be sent home approximately two (2) weeks prior to the end of the school year.

- Checks returned for Non-sufficient Funds (NSF): , when a check is returned to the Town Treasurer's Office for "NSF", a letter will be mailed to inform the parent (s) along with the appropriate penalty fee, pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 60, Section 57A. Payment must be made within (10) days of the letter to the Town Treasurer's

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Office. When the NSF notice is received, the Food Service Director will deduct the check amount from the student (s) account.

- Balances Owed with no response from Parent/Guardian: If the amount owed is not received, the Superintendent or his/her designee may refer to small claims court and/or District Attorney's Office.

4. Fiscal Year End:

At the first of June, the Food Service Department must begin the process of closing out the fiscal year and reconciling all accounts with the Finance Director/Town Accountant and Town Treasurer. As a result, the point of sale system will be blocked from accepting deficit account balances, including the account cap limits.

- Parents/Guardians will be sent a written request for "Payment in Full". The payment requests will be mailed to the home address on file.
 - All charges not paid before the end of the school year must be dealt with through other means such as reclassifying expenditures to the General Fund budget, or appropriate donation account or other means pursuant to new USDA federal regulations. This burdens the general fund budget or other funding sources and affects its ability to fund teachers, instructional supplies, and other expenditures necessary to operate the school district.

5. Other Matters:

All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain a record of all monies paid and deposited for each student. Said record will be made available to the parent upon request. The Food Service Department shall inform parents that meals can be paid in advance to mitigate outstanding balance issues and to assure that their child's account has sufficient funds to minimize the possibility that their child may be without meal money on any given day.

If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the Principal will investigate the situation, including contacting the parent/guardian to bring money to the school and/or encouraging the parent to apply for free or reduced price meals. If the situation continues the Principal will report it to the Superintendent for further investigation.

- **Block on Accounts:** a parent may call the Food Service Director to place a block on their child's account to prohibit the purchase of a la carte items or set dollar cap.
- **Refunds:**
 - Withdrawn Students: For any student who is withdrawn, a written request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. An email request is also acceptable.
 - Graduating Students: Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given a refund. Funds can also be transferred to a sibling's account with a written request.

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- **Unclaimed Funds:** All refunds must be requested within one year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Douglas Public Schools Food Service Program. There will be no Adult Meal Charges allowed. Payment must be made at the time of purchase.

Legal References:

7 CFR 210, Office of Management and Budget Circular A-87 M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 72 – Sale of Lunches M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 68 – Duties of towns to maintain schools; transportation of children; school building committee representation M.G.L. Chapter 71, Section 37K – Business demonstration projects; disposition of proceeds M.G.L. Chapter 44, Section 69 – Municipal or district services, fees or charges; insufficient funds checks; penalty M.G.L. chapter 60, Section 57A – Payment by check not duly paid; penalty First Reading: August 5, 2015 Second Reading: August 19, 2015 Date Approved by the School Committee: August 19, 2015

Chapter 62 of the Acts of 2021, “An Act Promoting Student Nutrition” which amends Chapter 71.