

Addressing Unpaid Meal Charges

Allowable and Unallowable Charges



COLORADO
Department of Education

Required Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow only appropriate officials, who have knowledge of United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) confidentiality requirements and have a need to access a student's account balance or eligibility information, the ability to request payment from families with unpaid meal charges (unless the family has given consent otherwise)• Provide a meal if a student has money to purchase a full or reduced-price meal at the time of the meal service<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Do not use that money towards previously unpaid charges if the student intended to use the money to purchase that day's meal
Encouraged Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate payment reminders directly to adults in the family over the phone, email or send in a plain envelope or with other communication materials sent to all families• Offer families multiple payment options, including online payment• Continue to serve students with unpaid meal charges the regular reimbursable meal (or a low-cost, reimbursable alternate meal) in the same serving line<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ensure the alternate meal (if opting to provide one) is a healthy meal and does not single out students with unpaid meal charges
Prohibited and Discouraged* Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is unallowable for the Nonprofit food service account (Fund 21) to absorb unpaid meal charges<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Visit Debt and Donations Guidance resource• Withhold a diploma, transcripts or grades for unpaid fees or fines, CO state regulation (CRS 22-32-110 amended by HB 17-1301 08/2017)• Enlist volunteers, parents or guardians of other students to request payment from a family with unpaid meal charges• Suggest or require students to work off their unpaid meal charges• Publicly shame a student who is unable to pay for the regular reimbursable meal (such as grabbing a student's tray from their hands and throwing in the trash and/or serving an unappealing alternative meal)• Announce or publicize the names of students with unpaid meal charges• Require students with unpaid meal charges to use a different serving line to receive an alternate meal• Use hand stamps, stickers, or other physical markers to identify students with unpaid meal charges• Send clearly marked notices home with students who have unpaid meal charges

*As outlined in 7 CFR 245.8, many of the discouraged actions are prohibited when applied specifically to students eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Where Can I Learn More?

[Unpaid Meal Charges](#) — CDE School Nutrition Unit
[Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge](#) —USDA

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