

Bergen Center for Child Development

UNPAID MEAL CHARGES/OUTSTANDING FOOD SERVICE CHARGES

MEAL CHARGE POLICY

The School Committee is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on schoolwork, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs and minimizing any impact on students with meal charges. However, unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services is a self-supporting entity within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

Meal Charges and Balances

Students will pay for meals at the regular rate approved by the Bergen Center Lunch Program and for their meal status (regular, reduced-price, or free) each day. At the end of each month parents and or guardians will receive a lunch bill or invoice for the lunches their child received that month. The balance on the invoice is accumulative therefore if payment is not made that month the balance will continue to grow. After the balance enters the negative, the student will still be allowed to take a meal, and that meal will continue to be charged to the account at the standard lunch rate based on their meal status. The parent/guardian is responsible for any meal charges incurred. If there is a financial hardship, a parent/guardian should contact food services directly to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan.

Low or Negative Balance

Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service program. Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent directly to parent/guardians via email or regular postal mail at regular intervals during the school year. All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and those records are available to parents/guardians by speaking with the school's food service manager. The point-of-sale system is designed to prevent direct identification of a student's meal status. Parents/guardians will receive automated low-balance emails or mailed notices monthly if applicable. If notices do not result in payment, parents/guardians will receive a phone call from food services.

Delinquent Accounts/Collections

If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration may investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents/guardians and families are encouraged to apply for free or reduced-price lunches for their child. Any remaining funds for a particular student, whether positive or negative, will be carried over to the next school year.

The food service program will comply with all meal charge policy requirements of the United States and New Jersey Department of Agriculture and N.J.S.A.18A:3321.