

UNPAID MEAL CHARGE POLICY

The Bristol Virginia School Board recognizes that students need adequate, nourishing food in order to learn, grow, and maintain good health.

Unpaid Meal Charges

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs are integral in ensuring that students have access to nutritious meals to support their academic success. It is also imperative to protect the financial stability of school nutrition program.

The intent of this policy is to establish a process and procedure to handle situations when children eligible for reduced-price or full-price meal benefits have insufficient funds to pay for school meals; as well as for the collection of unpaid meal charges and delinquent account debt.

1. Students who qualify for free meals will not be denied a reimbursable meal even if they have accrued a negative balance on their cafeteria account.
2. Students who have money to pay for a reduced-price or full price meal at the time of service must be provided a meal. If the student intended to use the money for that day's meal, the School Food Authority (SFA) will not use the money to repay a negative balance or other unpaid meal charge debt.
3. No ala carte purchases will be allowed if a student has a negative account balance.
4. Students **without funds** to pay for a reduced-price or full price meal at **Virginia High School only** are allowed to charge one breakfast and/or one lunch meal (one day's worth of meals).
5. Students at Virginia High School who charge a meal will receive a reimbursable meal.
6. Virginia Middle School, Highland View Elementary, Stonewall Jackson Elementary, Van Pelt Elementary and Washington Lee Elementary are Community Eligibility Program (CEP) schools which means that all students may have breakfast and lunch at no cost.

7. **Adults**, including employees of Bristol Virginia Public Schools will **NOT** be allowed to charge a meal.

Communicating the Policy

1. The unpaid meal charges policy will be posted on the Bristol Virginia Public Schools website, it will be included in the student information packet distributed by mail and/or on the first day of school and will be provided to all transfer students during the school year. At Virginia High School only, the Household Application for Free and Reduced Price Meals will be attached and parents will be encouraged to apply for benefits.
2. The unpaid meal charges policy will be communicated to all division staff prior to the first day of school.
3. School Nutrition Program staff will receive training on the unpaid meal charges policy and a record of the training will be maintained as part of the professional development portfolio.
4. Documentation of the communication and training plan will be maintained for the Federal Program Administrative Review.

Notification of Negative Balance

1. The School Nutrition Program (SNP) staff will notify households of negative balances. The School Nutrition Manager or designee will be responsible for contacting households via telephone, by US mail or by sending a letter home by the student.
2. Notifications to households will include the amount of unpaid meal charges, expected payment dates, the consequences of non-payment and where to go for questions or assistance.
3. The student's household may be notified by email by My School Bucks Software if the low balance notification set up by parent/guardians through my school bucks is used. (www.myschoolbucks.com).

4. Students may inquire or see their account balance, if the cashier sees their balance is low, a friendly reminder will be communicated to the student.
5. The persons responsible for managing unpaid meal charges are:
 - a. SNP school-based staff who will collect payment for meals at the POS.
 - b. SNP school-based staff who will contact households.

Assistance to Households

1. Households with questions or who need assistance may contact the School Nutrition office where their student attends or the School Nutrition Program Central office at: (276) 821-5600, 220 Lee Street, Bristol, VA 24201 or email Kathy Hicks at khicks@bvps.org

Delinquent Debt/Bad Debt

1. Delinquent debt is not allowed in the School Nutrition Program (SNP) and may not be carried over to a successive school year.
2. Bad debt is defined as delinquent debt that is deemed uncollectible during the school year. Bad debt is unallowable in the SNP and cannot be carried over to the next school year. Funds resulting from bad debt cannot be recovered using SNP funds and must be offset by non-federal sources.
3. All delinquent debt and/or bad debt will be restored to the SNP from each building principal prior to the end of the same fiscal year.

Collection procedures for Delinquent and Bad Debt- Adverse Action

1. When a household has any unpaid meal charges at Virginia High School for a student, collection procedures will be initiated.
2. SNP management staff will send a letter to the household with the amount of debt and date of expected payment and include a Household Application to apply for free or reduced price meals.

3. If payment or arrangements to pay have not been satisfied, SNP staff will report the household to school administration. The school administration will call the household and attempt to collect the debt.
4. If payment is not received and/or if a parent regularly fails to provide meal money or send food to school with the student and the student does not qualify for free or reduced benefits the School Nutrition Director will inform the principal, who will determine the next course of action, which may include notifying the department of social services of suspected child neglect and/or taking legal steps to recover the unpaid meal charges.

The Bristol Virginia School Board is responsible for maintaining records that document compliance with this policy.

Adopted: by the Bristol Virginia School Board on June 5, 2017.

Legal Refs: U.S. Department of Agriculture, SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies, July 8, 2016.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments, July 8, 2016.

2 CFR Part 200 Section 143 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

Cross Refs: EFB Free and Reduced Price Food Services
 JHCF Student Wellness
 JHCH School Meals and Snacks