



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

October 16, 2017

TO: Deputy Superintendent  
Complex Area Superintendents  
Principals (All)  
School Food Service Managers

FROM: Dr. Christina Kishimoto  
Superintendent

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "CK", next to the name "Dr. Christina Kishimoto".

SUBJECT: **Policy SP 46-2016: Unpaid Meal Charges – Local Meal Charge Policies  
Revised 10/11/2017**

**This memo supersedes the original memo posted on August 4, 2017. Revisions include clarification of procedures and additional information pertaining to confidentiality.**

Based on the updated United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutritional Service (FNS) policy SP 46-2016: Unpaid Meal Charges - Local Meal Charge Policies and Hawaii Senate Bill 423 the following is the Department's policy:

- Students that were eligible for free or reduced-price meals during the previous school year will continue to receive the same benefits until a new application is processed or up until 30 days (grace period) of the new school year;
- All applications received at the school level shall be date stamped to authenticate submission date;
- Students that are submitting new applications and approved for free or reduced-price meals will receive a retroactive credit to clear charges based on application submission date. However, applications may not be backdated to the month prior, due to the closing of monthly reports;
- Students submitting a new application that results in their eligibility status changing from free to reduced or paid will incur a balance based on the applications submission date; and
- The process of backdating new applications will only occur during the first 30 days of the new school year, then the application submission date will be the date that it is received at the School Food Services Branch (SFSB).

Furthermore:

- Students who are unable to pay for their meal at the point of service shall be allowed to incur (**meal only**) charges for the first 21 days of school;
- The parent/guardian shall be responsible to repay all meal charges that are incurred during the first 21 days of the school year; and
- After the first 21 days, unpaid meal charges should not exceed the cash equivalent of seven days. (i.e. meals charged at full price are not to exceed \$25.20 for grades K - 8 and \$26.95 for grades 9 - 12.)

Schools shall disallow the charging of à la carte or extra items by any child with a negative balance, regardless of the child's eligibility status.

### **Payment Reminders**

Schools should make every attempt to proactively remind families of their child's low account balance. When sending payment reminders, schools are encouraged to communicate in a variety of ways to ensure the reminder reaches all families such as:

- **Written** - Schools may send discreet payment notices directly to a family's email account or place in the students "take-home folders." Schools should send notices in a plain white envelope with the child;
- **Verbal** - School officials may call families on the telephone to remind them to refill their child's account. Schools may choose to communicate payment reminders using a "robo-call" system to contact families on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, as needed;
- **Automated** – Parents may utilize the online payment system to send them automated alerts when a child's balance reaches a low level;
- **In Person** - A trusted school official may reach out to families with unpaid meal debt in person. Meal charges may be a sign of other challenges facing a family. Having a trusted school official assess the situation firsthand can help the school determine the appropriate response for each individual family; and
- **With Other Payment Reminders** - Schools may include all outstanding payments, including fees for books, school uniforms, and unpaid meal charges when sending notices to families. This streamlines communications and helps families track their payments.

In addition to the requirement to keep meal eligibility statuses confidential, low or negative account balances should also be kept private. Staff should not inform children of their meal charge debt in front of other students. Schools are to communicate low accounts balances with the family privately ahead of time. Also, schools must ensure that rosters, computer screens, or other equipment used at the point of service cannot be viewed by anyone who does not need access to the information, especially other children. The information should be masked or coded to prevent children or other visitors from viewing any student's account balance or status.

### **Collection of Unpaid Meal Charges**

Schools must make reasonable efforts to collect meal charges. Schools who fail to collect payment will need to reimburse SFSB at the end of each school year. All communication attempts to collect unpaid meal charges should be accurately documented for accountability.

The following records should be maintained to document the appropriate establishment and handling of unpaid meal charges:

- Evidence of efforts to collect unpaid meal charges in accordance with the unpaid meal charge policy;
- Evidence the collection efforts fell within the timeframe and methods established by the meal charge policy;
- Telephone parent/guardian; document date and time of the call. If no one answers the call, do not leave a detailed message, simply request a return phone call; and
- Evidence of written notices sent to the family that document date notice was sent.

Should you have any questions, please contact Albert Scales, Program Administrator, School Food Services Branch, at (808) 733-8400 or via lotus notes.

CMK:lw

c: Dann Carlson, Assistant Superintendent, OSFSS  
Glenn Okimoto, Executive Assistant, OSFSS  
School Administrative Services Assistants  
Meal Count Assistants  
School Food Services Branch