



Book	ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS POLICY MANUAL
Section	E: SUPPORT SERVICES
Title	GUIDELINES FOR FOOD SERVICES RELATING TO STUDENT LUNCHES, DEBT COLLECTION, RETURNED CHECKS, AND REFUNDS
Code	EF-R
Status	Active
Adopted	August 4, 2009
Last Revised	August 29, 2022
Last Reviewed	March 6, 2017
Prior Revised Dates	August 6, 2012; August 7, 2017; May 9, 2018; October 4, 2021

This regulation establishes procedures for: (a) providing breakfasts and lunches for students who do not have money to purchase school meals; (b) recovery of unpaid meal balances; (c) returned checks; and (d) refunds from the food service program.

Students Who Do Not have a Meal or Money to Purchase a Meal

School Board employees protect students from overt identification if they owe any unpaid meal charges or cannot pay for a meal at school. Students in grades K – 12 who do not have a meal or money to purchase a meal, will have the following options:

1. Students will not be denied a full meal even if they have accrued a negative balance on their cafeteria account. Students shall not incur a negative balance with the purchase of a la carte foods, snacks, milk, or drinks.
2. Students who have money to pay for a reduced 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. Students will not be permitted to purchase a la carte foods, snacks, milk or drinks if their account is negative.
3. 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 child 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.

School Board employees are prohibited from requiring a student who cannot pay for a meal at school or who owes a school meal debt to do chores or other work to pay for such meals or wear a wristband or hand stamp. School board employees are required to direct any communication relating to a school meal debt to the student's parent, which may be made by a letter addressed to the parent to be sent home with the student.

COMMUNICATION

The written meal charge policy will be communicated to the household by posting on the OCPS division website, included in the student information packet distributed on the first day of school and to all transfer students during the school year, and attaching to the Meal Benefits Application.

RECOVERY OF UNPAID MEAL BALANCES

The division administration shall apply the following procedures in the collection of debt incurred by students and their families for meals provided by the division.

1. Balances up to \$15.00:
 - a. The parent or guardian shall be notified via automated phone call weekly of their child's debt balance; and,

2. Balances over \$15.00:

- a. A notification letter will be sent home from the cafeteria manager's office.
- b. Accounts will be referred to the School Principal and the Assistant Superintendent for Student and Administrative Services;
- c. The parent or guardian shall be notified weekly of their child's debt balance.

The account shall not be considered satisfied until all charges have been paid. The School Board does not file lawsuits against a student or the student's parent because the student cannot pay for a meal at school or owes a school debt.

At the end of the school year, the School Nutrition Program (SNP) Supervisor and the Chief Financial Officer will evaluate all delinquent debt for conversion to bad debt. Bad debt will be restored to the SNP from the general fund prior to the end of the same fiscal year.

ASSISTANCE TO HOUSEHOLDS

Households with questions or needing assistance may contact the school office where their student attends or the School Nutrition Program office at 540-661-4579.

RETURNED CHECK POLICY

It is the policy of the County not to accept checks for a period of twelve months if they have been returned for insufficient funds two times. The Food Service Department and respective cafeteria manager are notified not to accept checks from the individual, and the County Treasurer sends a letter to the individual.

REFUNDS

A request for refund of prepaid funds must be made in writing by the parent/guardian within 90 days of the student graduating, withdrawn, or transferring out of the district. If a refund is not requested within 90 days the funds will automatically be donated to a hardship fund that is used to cover uncollectable meal charges. The Food Service Supervisor must approve parental requests for refund at other times.

8/22 OCPS