

Meal Charge Policy

Introduction

The goal of IDEA Public School's (IDEA) Child Nutrition Program (CNP) is to provide students with healthy meals each day. The purpose of this policy is for IDEA CNP to be compliant with federal, state & local policy, and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.

Parents may provide their own child with breakfast, lunch or snacks. To ensure the health and safety of students with food allergies, intolerances and special diets students may not share food from home with other students. For more information, see the Wellness Policy at the IDEA Website referenced in the contact information below.

As per the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), pre-k, disabled and students with free eligibilities cannot be denied a reimbursable meal even if the student has accrued a negative balance.

Community Eligibility Provision effective 2019-2020 School Year

Effective July 1, 2019, CNP adopted the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to provide healthy meals for breakfast and lunch to all students, at selected schools, at no charge and eliminate the collection of meal applications and income verification for the upcoming school year. IDEA already offers free breakfast to all students, this adoption allows CNP to extend free lunch to all students at selected schools. Please note that if the student does not select a reimbursable meal, fees may apply for breakfast or lunch. For a complete list of school that qualify for CEP visit the IDEA website referenced in the contact information below.

Schools that do not qualify for CEP will continue the collection of meal applications for free, reduced and full priced meals. Since IDEA's student population is growing, CNP will submit data annually to LDOE to determine if schools continue to qualify for CEP the following school year. CNP will notify households on an annual basis regarding the CEP status for each school.

The Student Information System of IDEA Public Schools will obtain income surveys as per state compliance to obtain social economic data for some students not currently directly certified through CEP. Income surveys are only to obtain data, and will not affect students from CEP schools to qualify for free breakfast and lunch. Families who attend a campus that is not on the list above are asked to complete the free-and-reduced-lunch (FARM) application online at: <https://www.schoolcafe.com> or fill out the proper form and drop it off at their campus before the first day of school.

Students Must Apply Each School Year

New or returning students must apply each school year for free and reduced price meals. Meal Applications are available and may be submitted at the campus front office, cafeteria manager office or on-line at <https://www.schoolcafe.com>. Applications will be reviewed and an eligibility determination made within 10 work days of cafeteria management's receipt of the application.

Although we encourage all households to apply for free and reduced price meals, households may choose to deny benefits. Parents who deny these benefits will have a paid eligibility. See meal prices at the IDEA website referenced in the contact information below.

30 Day Carryover of Eligibility

Students enrolled in IDEA on the last day of class, will be allowed to continue their meal status (Free, Reduced, and Paid) for the first 30 operating days of the following school year or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first.

When the carryover period ends the student's eligibility will be paid unless the household submits a meal application that determines they are free or reduced, or the household is notified that their students are directly certified as free.

New students enrolling in IDEA who are transitioning from a Special Provision or Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) district will receive a carryover eligibility of free for the first 30 operating days of enrollment or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first.

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It is the responsibility of the parent to communicate to IDEA CNP the district their student is transferring from in order to offer the benefit to the student during the meal application processing period.

Transfer Students

New students transferring to IDEA during the school year from a Special Provision or CEP district will receive a carryover eligibility of free for the first 30 operating days of enrollment or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first.

New students not transferring from a CEP or Special Provision district and enrolling in IDEA will have a meal status of paid on the first day of school until an application is submitted by the household and processed by CNP.

Cafeteria management will do everything possible to collect a meal application. See meal prices at the IDEA website referenced in the contact information below.

Eligibility Changes

Households may update their meal application throughout the school year by contacting the cafeteria manager or reapplying online. For example, if your household size increases, changes in income occur, or your household receives SNAP, TANF or other benefits (such as unemployment benefits), the household may update their meal application. Negative balances resulting from eligibility changes for free eligible students are not collected from households by IDEA CNP. IDEA must subsidize the nonprofit school food service account for those meals annually for new and returning students.

Reduced Price Elimination by CNP

CNP has eliminated the price for reduced priced eligible students who take reimbursable meals. This will be reviewed on an annual basis and is subject to change. CNP will communicate to households any changes.

Paid Price Subsidized by IDEA

IDEA will subsidize the nonprofit school food service account for meal charges incurred by paid price eligible students who take reimbursable meals. This will be reviewed on an annual basis and is subject to change. CNP will communicate to households any changes.

A La Carte Charges

A la Carte transactions may not be charged on a student account with insufficient funds to cover the purchase.

No A la Carte items may be charged on a student account unless written communication has been received from the household by completing the “A La Carte on Account Charges” form. Balances incurred for A la Carte purchases will be collected by CNP. A la Carte purchases include snacks and menu items.

Households may establish a limit on the amount of prepaid funds a student may spend each day and whether a student is allowed to purchase a la carte by setting restrictions through School Café at <https://www.schoolcafe.com>. This gives the parent greater control of students’ unpaid meal charges.

Payments

Parents may make payments to their students account and monitor their balances by contacting their cafeteria manager or by logging onto: <https://www.schoolcafe.com>. Parents are encouraged to set low balance e-mail reminders on their account.

Cash, money orders, checks & credit cards are acceptable methods of payment. These payments are made at your IDEA’s cafeteria or designated area. Over the phone credit card payments are also available.

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IDEA CNP offers payment plans on all negative balance accounts. To elect this option, households may contact their campus cafeteria management. CNP will not apply a fee over the price of a meal or apply interest in connection with meals purchased or payment plans.

Non-Reimbursable Meals

CNP encourages all students to take reimbursable meals. If a student takes a non-reimbursable or incomplete meal, a fee will be charged regardless of student eligibility. IDEA will subsidize the nonprofit school food service account for fees charged. See meal prices at the IDEA website referenced in the contact information below.

CNP Contact Information

You may obtain important documents such as our menu, menu prices, Meal Charge Policy & Procedures and meal applications by visiting our website at <http://www.ideapublicschools.org/parents/resources>

For additional questions please call (956) 377-8236.

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis by CNP.

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Policy

I have received a copy of the Meal Charge Policy. I understand that if I have questions, at any time, regarding the Meal Charge Policy & Procedures, I will contact the Child Nutrition Program.

Student Last Name *

Student First Name *

Student Middle Name

Parent/Guardian Signature *

Non-Discrimination Statement: This explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, and American Sign Language) should contact the responsible State or local Agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online, at <https://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/ad-3027>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by: **mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; **email:** program.intake@usda.gov.

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