

## **First Lutheran School Unpaid Meal Charge and Debt Collection Procedure**

### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent school practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts and the collection of unpaid meal debt.

### **II. General Statement of Policy**

A. First Lutheran School's goal is to provide nutritious meals to students to promote healthy eating habits and enhance learning as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Lunch program and eliminate stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges.

B. It is the policy of First Lutheran School to offer lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.

C. First Lutheran School families send payments to the school office and the secretary enters the payment into our Fast Direct accounting system

D. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are distributed to all families in the district prior to the student's first day of classes. In addition, applications are available through our Fast Direct communication system or by obtaining an application in the school office during normal business hours 8:00AM-3:00PM . If household income or size change, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

### **III. Charge Policy**

A. If the student or family account has insufficient funds to pay for lunch meals, First Lutheran will allow families to **charge up to \$30 in meals**. Parents are notified of low accounts by the school office on a regular basis.

- **Students will be allowed to charge up to \$30 for meals.**
- Students in elementary grades will always be given a meal.
- **A "courtesy meal" consisting of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and milk will be offered at lunch for students when the balance is negative \$30.**
- Students with an overdrawn account are not allowed to charge ala carte items.

B. Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals will always be served a meal regardless of unpaid food service accounts. When a student eligible for PAID meals has "cash in hand" to pay for a meal, the student will be served a meal regardless of unpaid foodservice accounts. The "cash in hand" will not be applied towards past due balances.

### **IV. Notification of Account Status**

A. Families can check their lunch account on Fast Direct.

- Families can contact the office for account balances.

- Households will be regularly apprised of student meal account balances through Fast Direct

B. The student/family will be notified when the account has a negative balance through Fast Direct as well as a note sent home.

Sample Text Options:

- Weekly emails will be sent the later part of the week to all payors of the family with a negative food service account.
- Food Service Department will encourage parents to complete the free/reduced-price meal application.
- A second request for payment is sent if parents have not responded to the first request.

#### **V. Collection of Unpaid Meal Debt**

When the student meal balance is a negative \$30 the following collection actions will be taken:

- The school secretary will contact the household through Fast Direct to request payment.
- The Food and Nutrition staff will contact the building principal if no payment is received. The principal will contact the parent/guardian via a phone call to determine an appropriate solution.
- Assistance from the county social services may be requested by the school if parents refuse to provide meals or pay for school prepared meals for their children.
- The expectation is all fees owed to the school will be paid in full on the last day the student will be attending classes.

Source: First Lutheran School

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