

## **Tioga Central School District Charge Meal Policy**

### **I. Purpose**

The goal of the Tioga CSD is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a student whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a student whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. The purpose of this policy is to insure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the Tioga CSD in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular and reduced price school breakfast and lunch meals only. The Tioga CSD provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

### **II. Policy**

**Free Meal Benefit** - Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

**Reduced Meal Benefit** - Reduced eligible students for the elementary school will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice for .00 cents and a lunch of their choice for .00 cents each day. Reduced eligible students for the middle/high schools will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice for .25 cents and a lunch of their choice for .25 cents each day. A student will be allowed to charge a maximum of 5 meals to their account after a zero balance is reached. The charged meals offered to students will be the same reimbursable meals that are available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

**Full Pay Students** - Students will pay for meals at the district's published paid meal rate each day. A student will be allowed to charge a maximum of 5 meals to their account after a zero balance is reached. The charged meals offered to students will be the same reimbursable meals that are available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

#### ONGOING STAFF TRAINING:

- Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the NYSED Webinar or the school's training program.
- Staff training includes ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

#### PARENT NOTIFICATION:

- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student has accrued meal charges within a week after they have reached the charge meal limit of 5 meals and every 2 weeks thereafter.

#### PARENT OUTREACH:

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.
- Staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- Staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

#### MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

- Staff will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- Schools will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

## ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

- The district will conduct a daily direct certification search with NYSSIS for all new students. Four times a year, the district will conduct a direct certification by utilizing a district drop through NYSED to maximize free eligibility.
- The district will provide parents/guardians with free/reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet. The information can also be found on the districts website: <http://www.tiogacentral.org>, Departments Tab (Food Services).
- Schools will provide at least two additional free/reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.
- Schools will use administrative prerogative judiciously, only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the parent/guardian only with available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.
- Schools will coordinate with the districts homeless coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via [myschoolbucks.com](http://myschoolbucks.com) or with a check payable to Tioga Food Service Dept. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds for withdrawn, and graduating students; a written or e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduating at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer to a sibling's account with a written request.

Unclaimed Funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Tioga CSD Food Service Program.