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ZACHARY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM

MEAL DEBT COLLECTION PROCEDURES



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MEAL DEBT COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The Zachary Community School District recognizes that healthy, nutritious meals are an important component to student readiness and ability to learn. However, unpaid meal debt places a financial strain on our Child Nutrition Program's budget.

The intent of this procedure is to establish methods of payment, charge availability, collection methods, refunds, and transfers.

The goals of this procedure are:

- To maintain the financial integrity of all Child Nutrition Programs conducted in the Zachary Community School District.
- To establish a consistent district procedure regarding the method of payment for extra items purchased during mealtimes, charge availability, collection methods, refunds, and transfers.
- To treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts.
- To support positive interactions with students, parent(s)/guardian(s), and district staff to the maximum extent possible.
- To establish procedures appropriate for students and staff.
- To encourage parent/guardian/adult students/staff to assume the responsibility of payments of extra items purchased.

COMMUNITY ELIGIBILITY PROGRAM:

What is the Community Eligibility Program, better known as CEP? It is a Federal Program that allows ALL students in the ZCSD to receive free breakfast and lunch meals. However, a school system must qualify for this program and, at this time, ZCSD does NOT qualify.

What is free? A reimbursable meal is free. A "reimbursable meal" is defined as a meal consisting of at least three (3) of the five meal components that are offered at lunch and must include a fruit and/or vegetable choice.

What is an extra? An extra is an item a student can purchase such as an extra slice of pizza, hamburger, and/or milk. In addition, an extra could be a wholesome snack. If your child purchases an extra item, there is a charge associated with that item. If you do not want your child to purchase any extra items, please contact the school cafeteria and speak with the manager. This information will be entered into the computer system and your child will not be allowed to purchase any extra items.



STUDENTS

PROHIBITION ON DENIAL OF MEALS TO STUDENTS

Policy Statement

No employee, contractor, substitute, or volunteer of the Zachary Community School District Child Nutrition Program (CNP), regardless of position, campus assignment, or length of service, has the authority to deny a reimbursable meal to any student under any circumstance. This includes, but is not limited to, circumstances involving unpaid meal balances, negative account status, incomplete or missing meal applications, disciplinary status, or any other administrative, financial, or behavioral condition.

Scope of Application

This policy applies to all CNP staff at every campus within Zachary Community School District, including cafeteria managers, head cooks, clerks, servers, and any personnel involved in the point-of-service meal distribution process. It applies during breakfast, lunch, and any other meal service operated under the CNP.

Prohibited Conduct

No staff member may:

- Refuse to serve a meal to any student for any reason related to account balance, unpaid charges, or failure to complete a meal application or benefit form.
- Withhold, delay, or reduce a meal, or provide an incomplete meal, as a means of enforcing payment.
- Require a student to perform any task, chore, or alternative activity in exchange for receiving a meal.
- Discard, throw away, or confiscate a meal already served to a student due to balance status.
- Communicate account balance concerns directly to a student in lieu of, or in front of, other students.

STAFF TRAINING AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

All CNP staff will receive training on this policy on an annual basis, including specific procedures for administering the alternative meal option in a manner that protects student dignity and confidentiality. Staff will be required to sign an acknowledgment confirming their understanding of and compliance with this policy as part of onboarding and annual training documentation.



REPORTING AND ENFORCEMENT

Any staff member who becomes aware of a violation of this policy is required to report it immediately to their Cafeteria Manager and the Supervisor of Child Nutrition. Violations of this policy will be treated as a serious matter and are subject to progressive disciplinary action up to and including termination, consistent with district human resources policy.

POLICY AUTHORITY

This policy is established and enforced by the ZCSD Child Nutrition Program in accordance with USDA regulations governing the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP), which require that reimbursable meals be made available to all enrolled students regardless of their ability to pay at the time of service.

METHODS OF PAYMENT:

The Zachary Community School District will accept pre-payment in the form of cash, check, or money order. **Payments can also be made online at www.myschoolbucks.com.** **Checks should be made payable to Zachary Community School District Child Nutrition Program or ZCSD CNP.** If paying with a check, please write one check per school. In the memo section of the check, write the student's name – lunch money. For example: Jane Smith-lunch money. It is recommended for elementary students that the check or cash payments be placed in a sealed envelope that is labeled with the student's name, lunch money, and amount sent.

Students who pay each day, the cashier shall collect the money payment from the student and record in the computer the student's payment along with the student's ID for proper accounting purposes. We have a NO CHANGE policy so all monies given to the cashier will be put in the student's account. Students spend less time in line if charges for extra items are prepaid.

Students shall be allowed to pay by the week, the month, or the year. The cafeteria manager shall collect and record all advanced payments. Upon entering the payment information, the computer shall assign each student a number and shall keep a record of the financial status for students that have paid in advance.

Charging for extra items is not allowed. If a student is allowed to purchase extras, prepayment is required prior to purchasing.

Checks will ONLY be accepted through June 15th of each school year, no exceptions.



NSF CHECKS

An NSF check is a check that has been deposited in a student's account but returned to ZCSD CNP department by the bank as non-payable.

Upon receipt of an NSF check, the CNP purchasing agent edits the student's account for the amount of the check. The CNP purchasing agent keeps the NSF check and a copy of the student's account statement showing the before mentioned transaction, and enters the amount in the NSF checks spreadsheet.

The CNP purchasing agent shall call the parent/guardian of the student to notify the household of the NSF check. One attempt to contact the parent/guardian by telephone shall be made by the CNP purchasing agent.

The CNP purchasing agent shall collect the cash or a money order for the amount of the check. The cash or money order must be received within five (5) working days after the parent/guardian receives notification. If the money has not been received within five (5) working days, the check shall be turned over to Check Care for collection.

UNPAID BALANCES:

If a student has a low balance, less than \$10.00, that is due, the school's cafeteria manager or assigned staff member will send a letter home indicating the amount due and/or call the household to inform the parent/guardian of amount due. If a student has a balance due greater than \$10.00, a letter will be sent home indicating the charges due. At this point the front office staff will start making calls to try to collect the overdue balance.

In the event a household is struggling to pay the balance, the cafeteria manager can arrange a payment plan. The cafeteria manager will then be responsible to follow up with the student's account until balance is paid.

At the end of the school year, any unpaid charges are reported to the school's office, Child Nutrition Supervisor, and the Superintendent.

The Cafeteria Manager will be responsible to document collection efforts and retain the document for current year plus the previous three (3) years. Manager will document who they spoke to, date, time, message, if they left a message, etc. This information will need to be readily available for audit by the Child Nutrition Supervisor and State of Louisiana Child Nutrition Program Staff.



ALTERNATE MEALS:

Once a student's account reaches a balance of \$20.00, the district will serve a full reimbursable alternate meal to students with unpaid balances instead of withholding a meal. Meals provided in this manner shall meet all federal meal pattern requirements and may be claimed for reimbursement in the appropriate eligibility category. Parents/guardians remain responsible for payment of all charged meals.

REFUNDS OF STUDENT ACCOUNTS:

A written request is required for refunds, this may also be in the form of an email. Send requests to ZCSD Child Nutrition Program, 3755 Church Street, Zachary, LA, 70791 or email to Bianca Coats, bianca.coats@zacharyschools.org or Jacqueline Staden, jacqueline.staden@zacharyschools.org.

At the end of each school year, parents/guardians may receive a refund of unused money from the student's account prior to the last day of school. No refunds will be given after June 30th of that year. Any remaining balance will be applied to the next school year.

TRANSFERS:

A written request is required for any transfers. A written request or email must be sent detailing the parents name and address, dollar value to be transferred, from which student, to which student and a contact name and phone number for the requesting parent in the event that there are any questions or complications. Send to ZCSD Child Nutrition Program, 3755 Church Street, Zachary, LA, 70791 or email to Bianca Coats, bianca.coats@zacharyschools.org or Jacqueline Staden, jacquelinestaden@zacharyschools.org.

USE OF STUDENTS ACCOUNTS:

Once money has been placed on a student's account, no one; sibling, friend, or parent may charge on that students account or use any funds in that account. The only person allowed to charge on a student's account is the student with the identification card matching the name on that account.



UNCLAIMED FUNDS:

A written request is required for all refunds. A written request or email must be sent detailing the parents name and mailing address, student's name, and reason for refund. Send to ZCSD Child Nutrition Program, 3755 Church Street, Zachary, LA, 70791 or email to Bianca Coats, bianca.coats@zacharyschools.org or Jacqueline Staden, jacquelinestaden@zacharyschools.org.

If you have another child in the school district, the balance may be transferred to him/her and will remain in the student's account for the following school year.

TEACHERS AND STAFF

METHODS OF PAYMENT:

The Zachary Community School District will accept pre-payment in the form of cash, check, or money order. Check should be made payable to Zachary Community School District Child Nutrition Program or *ZCSD CNP*.

Teachers and staff members can set up an account with the Child Nutrition Office to pay for meals. Once an account has been set up, teachers and staff members can then make payments online at myschoolbucks.com. Cash and checks will be accepted at the time of meal service.

The management of Child Nutrition Funds should be in accordance with sound business practices, including sound budgeting, purchasing, and accounting practices. Lending money to faculty members and school staff are prohibited uses of Child Nutrition Funds. Therefore, teachers and staff members will not be allowed to charge meals at any school cafeteria. As stated above, cash and checks will be accepted at the time of meal service.

If the Child Nutrition Office receives an NSF check from a ZCSD staff member, the staff member will no longer be allowed to pay for meals with a personal check.

Checks will ONLY be accepted through May 15th of each school year, no exceptions.



REFUNDS OF TEACHER ACCOUNTS:

A written request is required for refunds, this may also be in the form of an email. Send requests to ZCSD Child Nutrition Program, 3755 Church Street, Zachary, LA, 70791 or email to Bianca Coats, bianca.coats@zacharyschools.org or Jacqueline Staden, jacquelinestaden@zacharyschools.org.

At the end of each school year, you may receive a refund of unused money from your account prior to the last day of school. No refunds will be given after June 30th of that year. Any remaining balance will carry over to the next school year.

GUEST MEALS

METHODS OF PAYMENT:

The Zachary Community School District will accept pre-payment in the form of cash, check, or money order. Checks should be made payable to Zachary Community School District Child Nutrition Program or *ZCSD CNP*.

Refunds are not given for guest meals.

Checks will ONLY be accepted through May 15th of each school year, no exceptions.

TRAINING

Child Nutrition Employees who are responsible for Point of Sale, Cafeteria Managers, and Clerks will be required to read this procedure and sign and date the form at orientation which will indicate their understanding of this procedure. Annual training will be required with the above mentioned employees at staff orientation. Annually the above mentioned employees will be required to read and sign this procedure at orientation. A copy of which will be placed in their employee documentation file in the Child Nutrition Office.



MONITORING

On a monthly basis, the Child Nutrition Supervisor will assess the debts for both students and ZCSD staff for all schools. Any account over \$10.00 will be flagged and Cafeteria Managers will be required to report their collection efforts.