

Evergreen School District
Child Nutrition Services
Meal Charging Policy

The goal of Evergreen School District's breakfast and lunch program is to provide healthy meals to children during the school day. In effort to keep a positive dining environment and treat all students with respect and dignity, the following procedures regarding meal charging and collection procedures have been established district wide.

The goals of this procedure are:

- To maintain a positive experience for students during meal service.
- To treat all students with dignity and respect.
- To establish practices which are age appropriate.
- To minimize meal charges and encourage parents to pre-pay for all meals.
- To promote parent's responsibility for meal payments and self-responsibility of the student.

Meals on Credit

Evergreen School District recognizes that on occasion parents or students may forget or lose their lunch meal money. In such cases at the elementary level, the child's statement of need will be accepted and their complete reimbursable meal will be charged to their lunch account. Due to program limitations, only full reimbursable meals can be charged to their account. No a la carte items can be charged. To promote student self-responsibility, no meals or a la carte purchases on credit will be allowed at the middle school level.

Any monies received from students with a negative account balance must first be used to satisfy the negative balance. No change will be given back to students with negative account balances and any extra monies will be deposited into the student's account.

All meals eaten before a Free and Reduced Price meal application is approved are the responsibility of the parents/guardian and must be paid for as required by law.

Evaluate Individual Circumstances and Need

All households are encouraged to fill out a Free and Reduced Price meal application each year, regardless if they plan on purchasing meals at school or not. Households are notified about the availability of Free and Reduced Price meal applications through:

- Parent Handbook
- Registration Packet
- Summer mailer from Child Nutrition Services
- Evergreen School District Website
- Current lunch menus
- Outstanding balance phone calls and emails/text
- Periodic parent communications such as weekly parent newsletter, Peach Jar, social media, etc.

When a student repeatedly comes to school without a meal from home or money to participate in the school meal program, school administrators should consider if circumstances in the home warrant contacting social workers or Child Protective Services. Frequent requests may indicate the family's need for free or reduced price meals. If for any reason, parents decline to complete an eligibility application and the principal is aware that the student is eligible for free or reduced price meals, the principal may complete an application on behalf of the

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student. Written justification must be made on the application as to the reason the student should be receiving free or reduced price meals.

Meal Payments

Evergreen School District strongly encourages families to pre-pay for their meals in advance. Pre-paying for meals is a simpler way of managing their account and prevents unpaid meal charges. Paying for meals before the meal service also helps the lunch lines move more quickly, giving children more time to enjoy their meal. Households can pay for meals by:

- Paying Online: Visit www.myschoolbucks.com to make payments, set up low balance alert emails, and track transactions safely and securely anytime.
- Paying at your child's school: Students may pay cash or check when they are in the cafeteria. Pre-payments can also be left at the school office during normal business hours. Checks should be made payable to CNS and please include the student's full name and room # when sending in a payment.

It is the parent's responsibility to make sure that money is in the account or a home prepared meal is sent to the school with their child.

Repayment for Meal Charges and Returned Checks

Although students will receive a full reimbursable meal at the elementary level regardless of account status, any unpaid meals must be paid for as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to collect for unpaid meals. Unpaid meal charges will result in the following:

- A verbal reminder to student
- Automated email for balances less than -\$9.99
- Automated phone call for balances greater than -\$10.00

In case of delinquent payments or returned checks, a letter and additional phone calls will be made to the household. Returned checks will result in an additional \$25.00/check fee and checks will not be accepted from the household until the balance is paid. Delinquent payments or bad debts will be sent to a collection agency.

Negative balances will be considered delinquent once it reaches -\$35.00 (10 meals) or more and the household fails to contact the Child Nutrition Services office or make payments. Delinquent balances will be reviewed weekly by Child Nutrition Services office staff. Payment plans will be accepted on a case by case basis. Households should contact the Child Nutrition Services office as soon as possible to discuss further.

End of the Year Balances

At the end of the school year, any positive funds left in a student's account will be carried over to the following school year. Students eligible for reduced price meals and/or graduating or transferring out of Evergreen School District will be notified by mail with the balance amount available as well as refund, sibling transfer or carryover information.

Federal guidelines however prohibit the Food and Nutrition operation from writing off bad debts as a result of charged meals. Any unpaid meals charges not yet considered delinquent, will carryover as a negative balance on

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the student's account for the following school year. If the student has graduated or moved out of the district with a negative balance over the designated threshold, the unpaid meal charges will be considered delinquent and sent to a collection agency.

To protect family's confidentiality, account balance information will only be monitored and dispersed by the Child Nutrition Services Department. Debt collection procedures will also only be initiated by Child Nutrition Services staff. Debt thresholds and delinquent payment definitions will be reviewed annually by the CFO and CNS Supervisor to ensure the purpose of the meal charging policy is not jeopardized by the diversions of staff time and effort to collect payment.

Policy Communications

It is the full intent of the Evergreen School District that all households are made aware of the Meal Charging Policy. Households are notified about the Meal Charging Policy through:

- Parent Handbook
- Registration Packet
- Summer mailer from Child Nutrition Services
- Evergreen School District Website
- Outstanding and delinquent balance phone calls and communications
- Current lunch menus
- Policy posted in the school serving area and school front office

If at any time households have questions about their student's lunch account, current account balance, are facing a financial hardship or need assistance with completing a lunch application, they should contact the Child Nutrition Services department Monday – Friday 7:30am to 4:00pm at (408) 223-4500. The office is located at 2828 Corda Drive, San Jose CA 95122.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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