

Rolling Hills Public Charter School

NONINSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

8245

Unpaid School Meal Charges

The Charter School adopts the following policy to ensure Charter School employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, avoid identifying to other students or bystanders students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

Unpaid Meal Charges

When a student's school meal account funds are exhausted, a student paying the full or reduced price for meals may charge no more than negative \$50.00 to his or her school meal account. Students may charge breakfast and/or lunches and/or afternoon snacks up to the maximum amount. Charging of a la carte or extra items to a student's account will not be permitted with a zero or negative account balance.

The Charter School may deny students who have charged the maximum amount to not charge further meals until the negative account balance has been paid in full. However, such students will be allowed to purchase a meal if student pays for the meal when it is received.

Students who have charged a maximum amount and cannot pay out of pocket for a meal will not be provided an alternate meal.

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases.

The Charter will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balance reach negative \$1.00. If an account does have a negative balance communications will be advanced to the family in order to seek payment for the negative balance and re-establish a positive balance for the student's use through an automated email sent to each guardian on the Wednesday of each school week. An additional email and/or phone call by Food Service Director will be provided to a student's guardian if needed. This notice may include a copy or description of this policy and information regarding how to apply for free or reduced price meals, including contact information for the (federal program director), who can help them with the application process. Active effort to encourage eligible households to apply for free or reduced lunch may be used to prevent meal charges.

Unpaid meal charges, called delinquent, when payment is overdue and efforts are being made to collect it. Delinquent debt may be carried over at the end of the school year meaning collection efforts may continue into the new school year. This allows the Food Service Director to work with individual families to establish longer repayment plans and to continue pursuing collection efforts when children change schools within the district or move to a new school outside the district (In accordance with the USDA MEMO of March 23, 2017, Subject: Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q & A.

Efforts to collect delinquent debt may include use of collection agencies, small claims court, or any other method permitted by law, provided the benefits of potential collections outweigh the costs incurred to achieve those collections. When the Food Services Director or school administrator determine further collection efforts for delinquent debt are useless or too costly, the debt will be classified as “bad debt”. Once a delinquent debt is reclassified as a bad debt it must be written off as an operating loss. Losses from bad debt will be restored using non-federal fund sources.

Extra efforts will be made at the end of the school year in an attempt to make sure that all student accounts will be either positive or zero balance before end of the Charter School year. A letter will be emailed to all guardians with both positive and negative account balances in order to inform and help aid guardians to keep students from accruing a negative balance by the last day of school. Any transferring 8th students or students who will not be attending Charter School the following year will be directly contacted by the Food Service Director in an attempt to collect any negative balance, refund a positive balance, transfer positive balance to another student and/or request that any positive balance be donated back to the Charter School to pay off any bad debt.

Any residual positive balance will roll over to the following school year of any returning student.

Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to prepay meal costs. Payments for school meals may be made by:

1. Bringing payment to the breakfast/lunch point of service or Charter School office
2. Making a payment on the Charter School website for a small fee:
<https://rhpcsfood.maxcheckout.com/>

Notification

The Charter School will provide a copy of this policy to all households at the start of the school each year and to families and students that transfer into the Charter School at the time of transfer. All Charter School staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy shall also receive a copy of this policy. It may also be communicated to school social workers, school nurses, the homeless liaison, or other staff members who may assist students in need. The Charter School may also make this policy available in student handbooks, on Charter School website, or by other means deemed appropriate.

Records

Records of how and when this policy is communicated to households and staff will be retained.

The Charter School shall also retain documentation of the handling of bad debt, including:

1. Evidence of efforts to collect unpaid meal charges in accordance with this policy:
2. Evidence the collection efforts fell within the timeframe and methods established by this policy;
3. Financial documentation showing when the unpaid meal charge(s) became an operating loss; and

4. Evidence any funds written off as bad debt were restored to the nonprofit school food service account using non-Federal sources.

Charitable Assistance

The Charter School may establish an unpaid meal charges fund to cover the cost of unpaid meal charges. Charitable groups, individuals, school fundraisers, and others may donate to this fund. Parents/guardians of children who pay the full amount for school meals and who have funds left over in their school meals account at the end of the school year may be offered the option of donating these funds to the unpaid meal charges fund.

If the Charter School chooses to establish an unpaid meal charges fund, the Principal or his or her designee shall establish procedures for the use of such funds.

Other Reference: 2017 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools, United States Department of Agriculture
Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance Q&As, March 23, 2017, United States Department of Agriculture

Legal Reference: SP 46-2016 and SP 59-2016 Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies, United States Department of Agriculture

Policy History:

Adopted on: 11-18-2015

Revised on: 10-25-2017, 4-19-18, 11/8/18