

## **School Meal Payment and Collection**

Federal school meal programs are an important part of fostering a healthy and positive learning environment in which children can succeed. RSU 40 is an essential partner in this effort.

The RSU 40 Board adopts the following:

### **I. Prepaid Meals and Meal Accounts**

- A. It has been and will continue to be the practice of RSU 40 to offer prepaid meal charge accounts to all reduced pay and full pay students.
- B. Adults are not permitted to charge food.
- C. Charging of A-La-Carte items is not permitted.
- D. Although every effort will be made to encourage pre-payment for charged student meals from those fiscally responsible, no child, regardless of grade level, whether qualified for reduced price meals or paying full price, will be denied a full meal because the parent/guardian has allowed the meal account to slip into arrears.
- E. RSU 40 will not overtly identify students with delinquent/unrecovered debt.

### **II. Recovering Unrecovered/Delinquent Debt**

#### **Definitions**

Under federal guidance bad debt and unrecovered or delinquent debt are separate categories:

- 1. **Unrecovered or delinquent debt** refers to meal charges that have not been paid by the student(s) or parent(s) during the school year.
- 2. **Bad debt** is unrecovered/delinquent debt that, after all reasonable steps have been taken, has not been recovered by, or before, the end of the school year in which the debt was incurred.

When a meal account nears zero, the Superintendent/designee shall notify the parent/guardian of the necessity to add funds.

If the account reaches and remains in arrears and prior to turning the matter over to the Superintendent/designee for further collection attempts, it shall be decided if further investigation to determine the student's eligibility for free/reduced meals is warranted and if so pursue same.

The Superintendent/designee shall actively pursue collection of the amount owed.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Food Services Fund may be positive at the end of the fiscal year, if student food service accounts are in arrears at that time, the debts are to be considered *bad debt* and nonfederal funding sources, including resources from the General Fund, must repay the Food Services Fund the total amount of the debt.

Parents/guardians will be held responsible for unpaid meal debt until the debt is satisfied, whether owed to the Food Services Fund or General Fund.

Any employee of RSU 40 who has reason to suspect that a child is, has been or is likely to be abused, neglected and/or deprived of essential needs, must immediately notify the Superintendent/designee (see Board Policy JLF).

In accord with U. S. Department of Agriculture SP 46-2016 the Superintendent/designee shall provide a copy of this policy to the Maine Department of Education and all RSU 40 Food Service Employees.

In accord with U. S. Department of Agriculture SP 23-2017 the Superintendent/designee shall disseminate this policy in writing at the start of each school year to all student households as well as households transferring to the school during the year.

**Legal Reference:** TITLE 32 MAINE REVISED STATUTES CHAPTER 109-A: Maine Fair Debt Collection Practices Act  
MAINE DOE RULE CHAPTER 51: Child Nutrition Programs in Public Schools and Institutions  
TITLE 2, CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS (2 CFR), SECTION 200.426:  
Bad debt  
2 CFR, PART 200, SUBPART E: Cost Principles  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SP 47-2016 July 8, 2016 Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments,  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SP 46-2016 July 8, 2016 Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SP 23-2017 March 23, 2017

Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A  
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CHILD NUTRITION SERVICES, MAY  
2006: Guidelines for School Policies on Handling Lost, Stolen or Misused Meal  
Tickets, and Charging of Meals by Students  
USDA LETTER: Unallowable Charges to Non-profit School Food Service  
Accounts and the Serving of Meals to Non-paying Full and Reduced  
Price Students July 21, 2009

**Cross Reference:** Board Policy JLF: Reporting Child Abuse  
Board Policy EFE: Food Sales and Competitive Food Sales

Adopted: June 1, 2017