



## Unpaid Meal Charge and Debt Collection Procedure

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish consistent district practices for the provision of meals to students who have insufficient funds in their school meal accounts and the collection of unpaid meal debt.

### General Statement of Policy

1. Immanuel Lutheran's goal is to provide nutritious meals to students to promote healthy eating habits and enhance learning as well as maintain the financial integrity of the National School Breakfast and Lunch program and eliminate stigmatization of children who are unable to pay meal charges.
2. It is the policy of Immanuel Lutheran to offer breakfast and lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
3. Families may submit payments to the school office in cash or online with a card. Families may pre-pay with either option.
4. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. The Application for Educational Benefits is distributed to all families in the district prior to the student's first day of classes. In addition, the Application for Educational Benefits is available at the school office which is open from 8:00am to 3:00pm during the school week. If household income or size change, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.
5. Immanuel Lutheran will maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student.

### Charge Policy

1. All meal purchases are to be prepaid before meal service begins. Families may add money to students' accounts via credit card using MealManage or sending cash or check with the student to school.
2. Once staff have placed a meal on a tray or otherwise served the meal to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meals balance.
3. Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals will always be served a meal regardless of unpaid food service accounts.
4. When a student eligible for PAID meals has "cash in hand" to pay for a meal, the student will be served a meal regardless of unpaid MealManage accounts. The "cash in hand" will not be applied towards past due balances.
5. Alternate meals may not be provided to students as a result of school lunch debt. Providing an alternate meal not on the scheduled menu violates a Minnesota law (Minn. Stat. § 124D.111) that requires respectful treatment of students regarding school lunch debt.

## Notification of Account Status

1. Any reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any child participating in the school lunch program, including but not limited to dumping meals, withdrawing a meal that has been served, providing an alternate meal, announcing or listing students' names publicly, or affixing stickers, stamps, or pins.
2. To find account balance:
  - a. Families can check their student's meal account balance via MealManage.
  - b. Families can contact the office for account balances.
  - c. The administrative assistant will send a weekly e-mail to all parents advising them of the student meal account balance(s).
3. *A notice will be emailed once a week to families whose account balance is negative.*
  - a. Weekly emails will be sent the later part of the week to all payers of the family with a negative food service account.
  - b. Food Service Department will encourage parents to complete the Application for Educational Benefits.
  - c. An email reminder is sent to parents requesting a payment when student accounts do not have adequate funds.

—

## Collection of Unpaid Meal Debt

When the student meal balance is  $-\$50.00$ , the following collection actions will be taken for the Elementary, Middle, and High Schools:

The school/district will not utilize collection agency services to collect unpaid school meal debt.

Sample Text Options:

- a. The administrative assistant will contact the household to request payment.
- b. The Food and Nutrition staff will contact the building principal if no payment is received. The principal will contact the parent/guardian to determine an appropriate solution.
- c. The building principal or their designee will contact the family and review with them their responsibility to provide meals for their student.
- d. The expectation is all fees owed to the school will be paid in full on the last day the student will be attending classes.

## Policy Communication

This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing to:

1. All households at or before the start of each school year,
2. Students and families who transfer into the school district upon enrollment, and
3. All school district personnel and third party meal service providers responsible for enforcing this policy.

The school/district must also post the policy on the school district's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Source: Independent School District Immanuel Lutheran

Reviewed: (Date) 12/20/2023

Approved: (Date) 12/20/2023

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or
2. **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:** [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.