

## **Iqra Unpaid Meal Charge and Debt Collection Procedure Policy**

### **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. Iqra Islamic School'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 Iqra Islamic School to offer breakfast and lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
3. Paid meals payments must be paid at the end of the month. Families can allow Iqra Islamic School to charge meal payments with monthly tuition payment on family account.
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 main office in Iqra Islamic School from 7am to 3pm. If household income or size change, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.
5. Iqra Islamic School will maintain the dignity of students by prohibiting lunch shaming or otherwise ostracizing the student.

### **Charge Policy**

1. If the student or family account has insufficient funds to pay for breakfast and/or lunch meals, the student will be provided with meals. The school will continue to communicate with families to make a payment as soon as possible. A student will not be denied food because the student has an outstanding balance.
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 Once staff have placed a meal on a tray or otherwise served the meal to a student, the meal may not be subsequently withdrawn from the student by the cashier or other school official, whether or not the student has an outstanding meal balance.
3. Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals will always be served a meal regardless of unpaid foodservice 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 foodservice 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. Iqra will make phone calls to parents/guardians of students with unpaid meal accounts.

Sample Text Options:

Families can check their student's meal account balance via Appams.

Families can contact the office for account balances.

Households will be regularly apprised of student meal account balances by monthly.

The student/family will be notified when the account has a balance of one full calendar month.

The Food Service Department will encourage parents to complete the Application for Educational Benefits.

A second request for payment is sent if parents have not responded to the first request.

A letter/invoice is sent via US Post to the household requesting payment.

NSF checks will follow the district "bad check" policy [identify where policy can be found].

Notification methods may be different depending on grade groups, individual circumstances.

### **Collection of Unpaid Meal Debt**

When the student meal balance is *one full month of school operation*, the following collection actions will be taken:

The school will contact the parent/guardian via phone to notify parents of outstanding balance. The school will make repeated calls and reminders of the balance.

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

Sample Text Options:

The school administrator will contact the household to request payment.

The building principal or their designee will contact the family and review with them their responsibility to provide meals for their student.

Assistance from the county social services may be requested by the school if parents refuse to provide meals or pay for school prepared meals for their children.

A formal letter will be sent to the household notifying that the debt will be turned over to the collection agency and the student meal account will be closed.

The expectation is all fees owed to the district 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

Reviewed: May 1, 2023

Approved: May 1, 2023