

BYRON-BERGEN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



Meal Charge and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan

To Be Approved by the Byron-Bergen Board of Education

I. PURPOSE

The goal of the Byron-Bergen Central School District is to provide student access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. The purpose of this Plan is to insure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed, or embarrassed.

The intent of this Plan is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout the Byron-Bergen Central School District in a way that does not stigmatize, distress, or embarrass students. The provisions of this Plan pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch, and snack meals only. The Byron-Bergen Central School District provides this Plan as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.

II. POLICY

Free Meal Benefit – Free eligible students will be allowed to receive a free breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Reduced Meal Benefit – Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice for \$.25 and lunch of their choice for \$.25 each day. A student will be allowed to charge a maximum of five (5) days of meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. Once the student reaches (5) days of charges, the School and/or School staff will proceed with notification to parent/guardian as specified in the plan. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Full Pay Students – Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. A student will be allowed to charge a maximum of five (5) days of meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. Once the student reaches (5) days of charges, the School and/or School staff will proceed with notification to parent/guardian as specified in the plan. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

ONGOING STAFF TRAINING:

- All newly hired staff will be trained, using the Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan as a guideline, to prevent any shaming, distress or embarrassment to students. In addition, staff will be trained on how to interact with students and parents/guardians in an appropriate manner.
- Staff will be trained annually on the first Superintendent's Conference Day in September and a refresher class will be held on the Superintendent's Conference Day held in the month of January. In addition, training will be conducted throughout the year on an as needed basis. This training will focus on the procedures for managing meal charges using the NYSED Webinar or the School's training program.
- Staff training will include ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

PARENT NOTIFICATION:

- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's account balance is exhausted once the student has reached five (5) full days of charges. Notification will occur within three (3) working days and then every three (3) working days thereafter.
- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student has accrued meal charges within three (3) working days of the student reaching five (5) full days of charges and then every three (3) working days thereafter.
- Byron-Bergen Central School District will utilize auto calling, email, United States Postal Service, and telephone calls to notify parents.

PARENT OUTREACH:

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians with five (5) or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.
- School staff will make two (2) documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- School staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

- School staff will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other student.
- Students who incur meal charges will not be identified, embarrassed or punished. (ex: required to wear a wristband or handstamp, or to do chores or work to pay for meals.

- School staff will not take any action directed at a student to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- School staff will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

- School staff will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload at least monthly to maximize eligibility.
- School staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet.
- Schools using electronic meal application will provide an explanation of the process in the school enrollment packet and instructions on how to request a paper application at no cost.
- Schools will provide at least two (2) additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.
- Schools will use administrative prerogative judiciously, only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the parent/guardian only with available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.
- Schools will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators at least monthly to certify eligible students.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via www.myschoolbucks.com or with a check payable to Byron-Bergen Central School District. Further details are available on our webpage at www.bbschools.org. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds for withdrawn and graduating students are automatically generated for students with balances over \$5.00. A written or emailed request for a refund of money for students with balances less than \$5.00 must be submitted by parent to the Business Office. The balances of students who are graduating at the end of the year will be transferred to a sibling, if possible.

Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of the Byron-Bergen Central School District Food Service Program.