Colorado Early Colleges Food Services

School Meal Charging Process and Procedure

Our Intent

The CEC Food Services department is self-sufficient and relies on payments, in addition to federal reimbursements, to maintain the level of service provided and financial stability of the program. It is the expectation that families will work with us to keep accounts in good standing and be accountable for meal charges accrued by their child(ren). We want mealtime to be a positive experience for all students and will serve every child a well-balanced meal when they enter the line and request one. Because hunger is an impediment to learning, no child will be denied a school meal unless directed by the child's parent/guardian.

Student Accounts and Parent Notifications

- The goal is for student accounts to remain positive
- All households are accountable for meal charges
- All account balances, positive or negative, carry over to the next school year
- Parents will be notified automatically of low balance and negative balance accounts through automated phone and email messages

To support families in maintaining positive balances, the CEC Food Services will:

- Provide accessible school meal deposit and payment option by:
  - Accepting payment (cash or check) at the school, sent with the student or electronically through the web. Colorado Early Colleges uses LINQ Connect to make online payments.
- Notify parents directly of low and unpaid account balances using the district's communications system through:
  - Automated low balance (below $5.00) phone and email notifications (weekly on Mondays)
  - Automated unpaid meal balance (more than -$0.01) phone and email notifications (weekly on Mondays)
  - Letter and account balances (more than -$10.00) mailed home from CEC Food Services
- Ensure all eligible families are certified for free and reduced-price school meals by:
  - Distributing school meal applications prior to the start of the school year or at the time of enrollment, as well as printed and available in each school office or online throughout the school year.
  - Regularly (weekly) utilizing data provided by the state or other school district officials to certify eligible children without application
  - Completing a school meal application by a building designee for any child known to be eligible for free or reduced-priced school meals if the household fails to apply

Financial Support

- The district will distribute, and make available, free, and reduced applications to households and proactively qualify a student for free or reduced-price meals through Direct Certification utilizing State systems that are available for District access.
- Applications are available in any school office or online and are accepted all year long as family financial situations may change at any time.
- Families transferring into the district may present CEC Food Services with a qualifying letter from their immediate past district and receive benefits seamlessly through their transition.

Charging

- CEC Food Services will not delay nor deny a meal due to a student having insufficient funds *unless we have received and processed a parent/guardian request that no school meal charging be allowed.*
- Students accessing meals with insufficient funds will be charged for each meal and parent/guardians notified. It will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to pay the charge and bring the student account to a positive balance.
- Adult/Teacher meal purchases cannot be charged.

A La Carte Sales

- Students may purchase an a la carte item(s) if:
  - They have a positive meal account balance which will cover the purchase
  - They have cash, and their meal account balance is not owing
- Students may not purchase an a la carte item(s) if:
  - Their meal account balance is negative, or said a la carte purchase will bring the account negative.
  - They have an a la carte block on their meal account set forth by a parent or guardian.
- A la carte purchases will not be reversed after they have been made. Communication regarding a la carte privileges should be made clear to students by parents or guardians prior to purchasing.

Direct Communication with Households

All communication regarding unpaid meal balances will be directed to parents/guardians. Students sixteen or older may be communicated with directly, yet discreetly, as well. Should a student ask about his or her meal account balance, CEC Food Services staff will communicate that information discreetly with the student.

Account Balance Refunds and Unclaimed Funds

All account charges are expected to be paid by the end of the school year. Account balances for a student will be carried over to the next school year. If a student is graduating or withdrawing with a positive account balance, a refund request form may be submitted. Unclaimed funds will be turned over to Colorado Department of Revenue.

Donated Funds

The CEC Food Services will equitably manage funds donated to offset unpaid student meal debts. The donated funds will be distributed throughout the district accounts according to district processes. The district welcomes families to donate excess funds left in their child's account, except in the case of households approved for reduced-priced meal benefits whose accounts must be refunded per federal requirements.

Repaying an NSF Check (Non-Sufficient Funds at Bank)

If the district receives an NSF check from a household during the school year, district guidelines state that no further checks will be accepted by the district for that current year and all associated fees will need to be paid by the household.

Collecting Unpaid Meal Debt

The CEC Food Services department will monitor unpaid account balances and work with families to understand the child and parents' situation to develop solutions to unpaid debt. The district will make reasonable efforts to collect delinquent (overdue) unpaid meal charges and will coordinate communications with families to resolve the charges. Meal account balances for a student will be carried over to the following school year.

Do You Have Questions?

For any general questions, please contact:

CEC Food Services
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melissa.fuerte@coloradoearlycolleges.org

For any questions about Linq Connect and related services, please contact:

Pam Cailteux
Nutrition and Compliance Manager
pamela.cailteux@coloradoearlycolleges.org

For any questions about the Free and Reduced Lunch application, please contact:

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CSI School Nutrition Program Manager
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