

**Policy 710.04: Meal Charges****Status:** APPROVED**Original Adopted Date:** 08/01/2022**| Last Reviewed Date:**

In accordance with state and federal law, the South Tama County Community School District adopts the following policy to ensure school district employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day, prevent the overt identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals, and maintain the financial integrity of the nonprofit school nutrition program.

**Payment of Meals**

All meal purchases are to be prepaid before meal service begins. All families/students shall establish a meal account that may be utilized for meal purchases. Students in the same family will be in one family account. Families may make payments into their meal account at any of the buildings that their child attends, online payments on the school website, or at the Administration Office.

Students who qualify for free meals shall never be denied a reimbursable meal, even if they have accrued a negative balance from previous purchases. Schools are encouraged to provide a reimbursable meal to students with outstanding meal charge debt. If an alternate meal is provided, the meal must be the same meal presented in the same manner to any student requesting an alternate meal.

Employees may use a charge account for meals, but may charge not charge meals beyond a zero balance to this account. When an account reaches this limit, an employee shall not be allowed to charge further meals or a la carte items until the negative account balance is paid.

**Negative Account Balances**

The school district will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low. Additionally, the school district will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. The school district will coordinate communications with the student's parent or guardian to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Parents or guardians will be notified when their account is at a positive \$15.00 by our automated calling system or by a call from the building their child attends if the account is severely negative. Negative balances of more than \$10.00, not paid prior to the end of the school year will be turned over to the superintendent or superintendent's designee for collection. Options may include: collection agencies, small claims court, or any other legal method permitted by law.

**Unpaid Student Meals Account**

The district will establish an unpaid student meals account in a school nutrition fund. Funds from private sources and funds from the district flexibility account may be deposited into the unpaid school meals account in accordance with law. Funds deposited into this account shall be used only to pay individual student meal debt.

**Communication of the Policy**

The policy and supporting information regarding meal charges shall be provided in writing to:

- All households at or before the start of each school year;
- Students and families who transfer into the district, at time of transfer; and
- All staff responsible for enforcing any aspect of the policy.

Records of how and when the policy and supporting information was communicated to households and staff will be retained.

It is the responsibility of the superintendent to develop an administrative regulation for implementing this policy.

Legal Reference: 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 et seq.  
7 C.F.R. §§ 210 et seq.  
U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 46-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: LOCAL MEAL CHARGE POLICIES (2016).  
U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 47-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: CLARIFICATION ON COLLECTION OF DELINQUENT MEAL PAYMENTS (2016).  
U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., SP 57-2016, UNPAID MEAL CHARGES: GUIDANCE AND Q&A (2016).  
Iowa Code 283A.  
281 I.A.C. 58.

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**I.C. Iowa Code**  
Iowa Code § 283A

**Description**  
[School Meal Programs](#)

**I.A.C. Iowa Administrative Code**  
281 I.A.C. 58

**Description**  
[Education - Breakfast and Lunch Program](#)

**U.S.C - United States Code**  
42 U.S.C. §§ 1751

**Description**  
[Public Health - School Lunch Program](#)

### Cross References

**Code**  
710.01

**Description**  
[School Food Program](#)

710.01-R(1)

[School Food Program - School Nutrition Program Civil Rights Complaints Procedure](#)

710.01-E(1)

[School Food Program - School Nutrition Program Notices of Nondiscrimination](#)

710.01-E(2)

[School Food Program - Child Nutrition Programs Civil Rights Complaint Form](#)

710.02

[Free or Reduced Cost Meals Eligibility](#)

710.03

[Vending Machines](#)