

SECTION E: SUPPORT SERVICES

EFD School Meal Payment and Collection

The Cooperative Board of Region 8 is committed to providing a school meal program as an important part of fostering a healthy and positive learning environment in which students can succeed.

A. Prepaid Meals and Meal Accounts

1. It is the practice of Region 8 to offer prepaid meal charge accounts to all reduced pay and full pay students.
2. Adults and post-grad students are not permitted to charge food.
3. Charging of A-La-Carte items is not permitted.
4. The parent/guardian is responsible for meal charges incurred.
5. No student will be denied a full meal because the parent/guardian has allowed the meal account to slip into arrears.
6. Students with a meal account in arrears may not purchase A-La-Carte items.
7. Region 8 staff will not overtly identify students with delinquent meal accounts.

B. Recovering Unrecovered/Delinquent Debt

Definitions – Under federal guidance bad debt and unrecovered or delinquent debt are separate categories:

1. **Unrecovered or delinquent debt** refers to meal charges that have not been paid by the parent(s)/guardian(s) during the school year.
2. **Bad debt** is unrecovered/delinquent debt that, after all reasonable steps have been taken, has not been recovered by, or before, the end of the school year in which the debt was incurred.

When a meal account nears zero, the Director/designee shall notify the parent/guardian of the necessity to add funds.

If the account reaches and remains in arrears and prior to turning the matter over to the Director/designee for further collection attempts, it shall be decided if further investigation to determine the student's eligibility for free/reduced meals is warranted and if so pursue same.

The Director/designee shall actively pursue collection of the amount owed.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Food Services Fund may be positive at the end of the fiscal year, if student food service accounts are in arrears at that time, the debts are to

be considered *bad debt* and nonfederal funding sources, including resources from the General Fund, must repay the Food Services Fund the total amount of the debt.

Parents/guardians will be held responsible for unpaid meal debt until the debt is satisfied, whether owed to the Food Services Fund or General Fund.

Any employee of Region 8 who has reason to suspect that a child is, has been or is likely to be abused, neglected and/or deprived of essential needs, must immediately notify the Director/designee (see Board Policy JLF).

In accord with U. S. Department of Agriculture SP 46-2016 the Director/designee shall provide a copy of this policy to the Maine Department of Education and all Region 8 employees.

In accord with U. S. Department of Agriculture SP 23-2017 the Director/designee shall disseminate this policy in writing at the start of each school year to all student households as well as households transferring to the school during the year.

Legal Reference: Maine Revised Statutes Title 32 Chapter 109-A: Maine Fair Debt Collection Practices Act
Code of Federal Regulations Title 2, Section 200.426: Bad debt and Title 2, Part 200, Subpart E: Cost Principles
U.S. Department of Agriculture Memo SP 47-2016 July 8, 2016 [Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments]
U.S. Department of Agriculture Memo SP 46-2016 July 8, 2016 [Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies]
U.S. Department of Agriculture Memo SP 23-2017 March 23, 2017 [Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&A]
Maine Department of Education FNS Instruction 765-7 (Food and Nutrition Services) 7 CFR 245.8

Cross Reference: JLF – Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

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