**Unpaid Meal Charge and Debt Collection**

**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. Trinity Lutheran Schools 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 Trinity Lutheran School to offer breakfast and lunch meals that meet state and federal guidelines.
3. $4.33 for Lunches, $2.28 for Breakfasts and .50 cents for milk will be reimbursed with a reimbursable meal. Milk may be charged ala cart if no meal is taken.
4. Families may apply for free/reduced-price meal benefits anytime during the school year. Meal applications are distributed to all families in the district prior to the student’s first day of classes. In addition, applications are available in the office during office hours. If household income or size changes, families can apply for meal benefits anytime during the school year.

**Charge Policy**

1. If the student or family account has insufficient funds to pay for breakfast and/or lunch meals, notification will be given to the family when their account is low so they have a chance to fund it.
2. An alternate meal will be provided through the backpack program in accordance with lunch guidelines of all 5 food groups. See suggestions below:

a. Students in elementary grades will always be given a meal.

b. An alternate meal from the backpack food program which we keep on hand, which meets the required meal pattern guidelines will be offered to students with an overdrawn account.

c. A “courtesy meal” consisting from the backpack food program for kids from pre-K to 8th grade when the balance is negative.

d. All students will be provided a meal regardless of meal account status.

1) Students eligible for free or reduced-price meals will always be served a meal regardless of unpaid food service accounts. 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.

**Notification of Account Status**

1. Balances will be charge to your Vanco account or billing will first be sent via email and if it is not resolved within 10 days a billing will be sent by mail.

a. Families can contact the office for account balances.

b. Households will be regularly apprised of student meal account balances through email.

1) The student/family will be notified when the account has a positive balance .

a. The parent/guardian will be notified via email when the household account is at $10.00 or less.

b. Food Service Department will encourage parents to complete the free/reduced-price meal application.

c. An email reminder is sent to parents requesting a payment when student accounts do not have adequate funds.

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

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

**Collection of Unpaid Meal Debt**

When the student meal balance is below $10 the following collection actions will be taken:

1. Elementary: The Secretary will contact the household to request payment.
2. The building principal or their designee will contact the family and review with them their responsibility to provide meals for their student.
3. The expectation is all fees owed to the district will be paid in full on the last day the student will be attending classes.

Source: Independent School District **Trinity Lutheran School**

Reviewed: (Date) **October 4, 2023**

Approved: (Date) **October 4, 2023**