



ENTHEOS ACADEMY

EXCELLENCE • SERVICE • LEADERSHIP

3301 NUTRITION COLLECTION POLICY

A. Purpose and Background

- I. The National School Lunch, Breakfast, and After-School Snack Programs are federal programs in which this school participates. Pricing policies for school meals are determined at the local level. This includes decisions regarding the extension of credit for meals and the option to provide alternate meals to students when there are insufficient funds in the meal account.
- II. Purpose of policy
 - a. Clarify how Entheos Academy will notify parents/guardians regarding outstanding meal accounts.
 - b. Notify parents/guardians of the school's procedures for providing meals if students' meal accounts are delinquent
 - c. Assure and remind parents and school employees that students will not be confronted or embarrassed with regard to money owed for school meals.

B. Definitions

- I. **“Meal Charges”** are any transactions made with Entheos in exchange for food through the lunch, breakfast, or other food and meal programs provided by Entheos Academy.
- II. **“Student Accounts”** are the grouping of meal charges by students attending Entheos Academy schools.
- III. **“Automated Meal Payment System”** means a web-based system that allows parents to review funds in students' meal accounts, informs parents of account balances and student meal payments, and sends messages to the parent when funds in the account are in the negative.
- IV. **“Collection Efforts”** means a collection agency or other means that Entheos Academy uses to collect delinquent lunch balances. **Entheos Academy may not withhold student records for unpaid school meal balances.**
- V. **“Delinquent Account”** means a student's meal fund account that does not have adequate funds to cover the meal charges by the student/parent. Entheos Academy is responsible

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for the collection of funds in advance of the meal being served, as well as the collection of delinquent accounts. The nutrition program is responsible for applying collected funds.

- VI. **“Federal Standards for Free Meals”** means the free meal receives the highest federal rate of reimbursement. The meal is served at no cost to the student.
- VII. **“Meal Charging”** means allowing students who do not have funds in their accounts to receive a reimbursable meal, with parents or other sources paying for the meal at a later date. Entheos Academy is not required by state or federal law to provide meals to students who do not have the funds to pay for the meal.
- VIII. **“Parent”** means a student’s parent, legal guardian, or person acting as the parent for school purposes.
- IX. **“Paid Meal”** means a meal served to a student whose parents have not qualified for reduced-price or free meals. This meal receives the lowest amount of federal reimbursement. The parent must pay the lunch price established by the Entheos Academy board.
- X. **“Point of Service”** means the place at the end of the line where meal payments and counting of reimbursable meals occur.
- XI. **“Reduced-Price Meal”** means a meal served to a student whose parents qualify for reduced-price meals.
- XII. **“Reimbursable Meal”** means a meal that meets the USDA requirements and may be claimed for payment from USDA.

Policy

- I. Before school begins, parents shall receive information from Entheos Academy:
 - A. about school meals;
 - B. stating the prices for the meals;
 - C. informing parents how they may provide payment for meals;
 - D. informing parents how their students qualify for reduced-price or free meals;
 - E. informing parents what students will receive if their meal accounts are delinquent;
 - F. informing parents of the policy for delinquent accounts.
- II. Entheos Academy will provide applications for free/reduced-price meals to parents at registration. The school shall also provide the school’s designated meal prices. Accompanying the information about the prices of school meals, parents will receive an application for free and reduced-price meals.
- III. If the student’s family receives benefits from the programs listed below, the household will qualify for meals at no charge upon receipt of proper notification. Schools will send the household an email/letter informing parents of a student’s eligibility for free meals. If a parent or family qualifies under one of these programs and has not received such a letter before school starts, the parent should contact the school food service.

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- a. Special Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- b. Family Employment Program (FEP)
- c. Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

Payments and School Verification

- I. Entheos Academy must verify, at some point during each student's meal service, whether the meal is reimbursable or non-reimbursable.
- II. Entheos Academy provides meal services in accordance with the National School Lunch Programs and State guidelines. Entheos Academy highly encourages all families to prepay for all school meals and will have a secure box available for cash and check payments.
- III. Students will not be informed of account balances unless they ask. Regardless of inquiry, students will not be told of their free/reduced status.
- IV. Entheos Academy shall credit meal payments to the student's account before the meal period for funds collected the day before. This ensures all funds are accurately applied to meal accounts before students select school meals. Schools will apply payments to the purchase of the current day's meal first, and the payment of past-due accounts second.
- V. Entheos does not charge for reduced-priced meals.

Identification of Delinquent Accounts

- I. Entheos Academy will identify student accounts that do not have adequate balances to pay for meals. Delinquent accounts will be identified, and notice emails will be sent daily. The school will contact parents **via** the automated meal payment system, phone, or email to allow them to indicate how they wish to make payments. Entheos Academy may ask students to take notifications addressed to the parent home with them; however, the school may not tell students to "remind" their parents to send money to the school.
- II. Entheos Academy will continue to provide full meals to all students and will notify parents that the school will use collection efforts to cover meal costs. Entheos Academy shall maintain documentation of parent notice.
- III. Entheos Academy is not required to provide a meal at no cost if a student does not qualify for a free meal. Because federal funds may not be used for the expenses of these meals, Entheos Academy must use state, local, or other funds to cover the cost of the meals. Entheos Academy will comply with all applicable state and federal laws in providing meals to students and in notifying parents.

Delinquent Balances and School Procedures

- I. Entheos Academy will follow the Delinquent Lunch Account Process for collecting payment on accounts with a negative balance.

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Step 1: Daily auto-generated emails will be sent to parents with a negative student meal account balance.

Step 2: When a student meal account exceeds \$20, Entheos Academy will call the parent/guardian.

Step 3: If the student meal account stays negative for four weeks, Entheos Academy will send a second notice letter by mail.

Step 4: If the student meal account remains negative for more than 90 days and all collection attempts have been *ignored*, a final notice will be sent by the School Director via priority mail.

Student Withdrawal, Refunds, Transfers, and Unclaimed Meal Account Balances

I. Parent/Guardian Request Required

Refunds or transfers of positive meal account balances are **not automatic**. A parent or legal guardian must submit a written request to the school to initiate a refund, transfer, or donation.

II. Timeframe for Requests

Requests for refunds, transfers, or donations must be submitted within **one (1) year** of the student's withdrawal from Entheos.

III. Refunds

Upon timely request, positive meal account balances may be refunded to the parent or guardian in accordance with school procedures.

IV. Transfers Within a Family

Upon request, positive balances may be transferred to a sibling's meal account within the same family, provided the sibling is currently enrolled at Entheos.

V. Voluntary Donations

Parents or guardians may elect to donate remaining positive meal account balances. Donated funds will be used to offset unpaid meal charges for other Entheos students.

VI. Unclaimed Balances

If no request for a refund, transfer, or donation is received within **one (1) year** of the student's withdrawal from Entheos, any remaining positive meal account balance shall be **donated to the school** and will be used to offset unpaid meal charges for other Entheos students.

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Additional Information

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides funds for meals served in schools, including breakfast, lunch, after-school snacks and special milk. Federally funded programs are subject to the cost principles outlined in Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 225, Appendix B (formerly known as Office of Management and Budget Circular A-87), which states “bad debts, including losses arising from uncollectible accounts and other claims, related collection costs and related legal costs are unallowable.” When parents fail to pay for school meals, the school can be hurt financially.

Overt identification: no discrimination against any student is allowed because of their eligibility for free or reduced-price meals (7 CFR 210.9 (b) (12)).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider