



**FOOD SERVICE CHARGING POLICY (FORMERLY:
“STUDENTS WITH OUTSTANDING FOOD SERVICE
ACCOUNT BALANCES”)**

STATEMENT

The school nutrition program is an extension of the Torrington Board of Education’s educational programs and it is the District’s vision to have a partnership among students, staff, school family and the community in offering access to and providing nutritious meals, which are attractively presented at an affordable price.

The Torrington Board of Education (Board) has an agreement with the Connecticut State Department of Education to participate in one or more school Child Nutrition Programs and accepts full responsibility for adhering to the federal and state guidelines and regulations pertaining to these school Child Nutrition Programs. The Board also accepts full responsibility for providing free and reduced price meals to elementary and secondary students enrolled in the District’s schools. Meals are planned to meet the specified nutrient standards outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture for children based on their age or grade group.

Although not required by law, because of the District’s participation in the Child Nutrition Programs, the Board approves the establishment of a system to allow a student to charge a meal.

The Board realizes that funds cannot be used to cover the cost of charged meals from the non-profit school food service account, according to federal regulations.

Moreover, federal funds are intended to subsidize the meals of children and may not be used to subsidize meals for adults (teachers, staff and visitors). Adults are not allowed to charge meals and shall pay for such meals at the time of service or through pre-paid accounts.

The Board strongly discourages meal charges, but understands that an occasional emergency makes it necessary. On those occasions that a student does not have money, they will be offered an alternate meal.

The cost of providing this alternate meal cannot be incurred by the school food service account. Paying students will be charged for alternate meals at breakfast and lunch at the current meal rate.

“**Alternate Meals**” are not clearly defined in federal and state regulations. The use of alternate meals refers to any meal served to a student that is different from the day’s advertised reimbursable meal. Alternate meals are most often provided to those students who have forgotten their meal payment(s) or have a negative account balance.

Elementary Students

1 . No elementary or middle school student shall be deprived a reimbursable meal due to forgotten or lost meal money. The District uses an automated system, which allows parents/guardians to view their child’s meal account balance and purchases, receive low-balance notifications, as well as, make deposits, to their child’s school meal account. Any student whose account has insufficient funds (i.e., is at the charging limit) and does not bring a meal from home may charge up to 2 meals. When the charge limit is reached, all other ala-carte items shall not be charged and an alternate meal will be provided until the charges are paid in full. This meal will not be charged to the student’s meal account. When a charge occurs, a written notification shall be sent home to parents. The status of the school meal account will not be discussed with the student.

2 . Parents shall be notified of negative balances. In situations in which a student is consistently without meal money, attempts will be made to discuss the issue with the parents/guardians and encourage them to complete a free and reduced meal application.

Secondary Students

1 . The District uses an automated system, which allows parents/guardians to view their child’s meal account balance and purchases, receive low-balance notifications, as well as, make deposits, to their child’s school meal account. Any student whose account has insufficient funds may charge up to 2 meals. After which, no snacks or a-la-carte items may be charged. When the charge limit is reached, an alternate meal will be provided until the charges are paid in full. This alternate meal will not be charged to the student’s account. A student with a negative balance shall be allowed to purchase a-la-carte items with cash, regardless of his/her balance.

2 . If a student requests his/her balance, the student shall be informed that his/her balance is low. After the allowed two meals are charged they will be informed that they will be given an alternate meal. Parents of students who charge shall be notified. If a pattern of charging continues, attempts will be made to discuss the issue with the parents/guardians and encourage them to complete a free and reduced meal application.

The Board authorizes the Superintendent to develop rules which address a process to communicate with parents/guardians when a student has a low balance on their meal account or when the account exceeds 2 charges.

This policy and alternate meal procedures shall be included in student/parent handbooks, placed on the District's website, on the website of each school, and published at the beginning of each school year at the time information is distributed regarding free and reduced price meals.

(cf. [3542](#)—Food Service)

(cf. [3542.31](#)—Free or Reduced Price Lunch Program) Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

[10-215](#) Lunches, breakfasts and other feeding programs for public school children and employees.

[10-215a](#) Nonpublic school and nonprofit agency participation in feeding programs.

[10-215b](#) Duties of State Board of Education re feeding programs.

State Board of Education Regulations
Operational Memorandum #19-10, State of
Connecticut, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

“Unallowable Charges to No-profit School Food
Service Accounts and the Serving of Meals to
No-paying Full and Reduced Price Students

National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; Competitive
Foods. (7 CFR Parts 210 and 220, Federal Register, Vol 45 No.
20, Tuesday, January 29, 1980, pp 6758-6772

Policy adopted:

Torrington Elementary and Middle School Alternate Meal Procedure

1. Cafeteria Managers will notify parents when \$10 remains in the student account.
2. When a student has a negative balance Managers will contact the parents three times via phone and paper notification. The cafeteria manager will keep a log of all calls and paper notifications sent to parents. The cafeteria manager informs parent/guardian that if the account is not paid, the student will receive an alternate lunch. The cafeteria manager reminds the family of the free account management resource.
3. Students will be able to charge 2 meals before alternate meal is given.

4. Cafeteria managers will place the list of those students needing alternate lunches in the teacher's boxes every morning. The teacher will notify the student of the alternate lunch for that day without discussing balances, money owed, etc. The student will know the lunch she/he is receiving prior to arriving at the cafeteria.
5. Cafeteria staff will not discuss student lunch account balances with the student.
6. The alternate lunch will consist of the bagel meal and will qualify as a reimbursable. The alternate breakfast will consist of the regular meal. Paying students will be charged for alternate meals at breakfast and lunch at the current meal rate.
7. Cafeteria managers will notify the principal and social worker when alternate meals are provided by giving them a copy of the list of students given to the teacher.
8. The social worker at each school will work with families to ensure parents are supported and notified of balances due as well as how to complete the free and reduced lunch applications.

Torrington High School Alternate Lunch Procedure

1. Student is made aware at point of sale, when \$10 remains in the student's account.
2. Student is allowed to charge 2 meals after the balance reaches zero.
3. When a student has a negative balance, managers will contact the parents three times via phone and paper notification. The cafeteria manager will keep a log of all calls and paper notifications sent to parents. The cafeteria manager informs parent/guardian that if the account is not paid, the student will receive an alternate lunch. The cafeteria manager reminds the family of the free account management resource.
4. Student receives alternate lunch at point of sale. If they selected items they cannot purchase, those are set aside. After the line clears, the main entrée must be disposed of, but the rest of the items are in sealed packages and can be sold.
5. The alternate lunch will consist of the bagel meal and will qualify as a reimbursable. The alternate breakfast will consist of the regular meal. Paying students will be charged for alternate meals at breakfast and lunch at the current meal rate.
6. After 3 attempts to contact families about a negative balance the cafeteria manager gives the names to the school social worker.

7. The social worker at each school will work with families to ensure parents are supported and notified of balances due as well as how to complete the free and reduced lunch applications.

Policy 6194: Students with Outstanding Food Service Account Balances Adopted: March 18, 2015. Revised November 1, 2017. Approved by the Torrington Board of Education on November 29, 2017. Updated December 17, 2017. Approved by the Torrington Board of Education on December 20, 2017. Policy Number Changed to 5194 on September 22, 2021 with BOE Approval.