



Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish School
8550 Main Street
Williamsville, NY 14221
Phone: (716) 633-7441 Fax: (716) 626-1637
www.nativityofmaryschool.org

Meal Charge and Prohibition Against Meal Shamming Policy

I. Purpose

The goal of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School is to provide students access to nutritious no- or low-cost meals each school day and to ensure that a pupil whose parent/guardian has unpaid school meal fees is not shamed or treated differently than a pupil whose parent/guardian does not have unpaid meal fees.

Unpaid charges place a large financial burden on our school. The purpose of this policy is to insure compliance with the federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program and to provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances to ensure that the student is not stigmatized, distressed or embarrassed.

The intent of this policy is to establish procedures to address unpaid meal charges throughout Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school lunch meals only. Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School provides this policy as a courtesy to those students in the event that they forget or lose their money. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (a la carte items, adult meals etc.) is expressly prohibited.

II. Policy

Free Meal Benefit – Free Eligible students will be allowed to receive a free lunch meal of their choice each day. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

Reduced Meal Benefit – Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a lunch of their choice for \$.25 each day. The charge meals offered to students will be reimbursable meals available to all students, unless the student's parent or guardian has specifically provided written permission to the school to withhold a meal. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.

On Going Staff Training:

- Staff will be trained annually and throughout the year as needed on the procedures for managing meal charges using the NYSED Webinar or school's training program
- Staff training includes ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals.

Parent Notification:

- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's account balance is exhausted and has accrued meal charges within 1 week of the charge then every week thereafter.

Parent Outreach:

- Staff will communicate with parents/guardians five or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free and reduced price meals.
- School staff will make two documented attempts to reach out to parents/guardians to complete a meal application in addition to the application and instructions provided in the school enrollment packet.
- School staff will contact the parent/guardian to offer assistance with completion of meal application to determine if there are other issues within the household causing the child to have insufficient funds, offering any other assistance that is appropriate.

Minimizing Student Distress:

- NBVM School will not publicly identify or stigmatize any student on the line or discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of any other students.
- Students who incur meal charges will not be required to wear a wristband or handstamp or to do chores to pay for work.
- NBVM School will not throw away a meal after it has been served because of the student's inability to pay for the meal or because of previous meal charges.
- NBVM School will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.
- Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.

Ongoing Eligibility Certification:

- NBVM School staff will conduct direct certification using NYSED Roster Upload to maximize free eligibility. NYSED provides updated certification data monthly.
- NBVM School staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced applications and instructions at the beginning of each school year.
- NBVM School will provide at least two additional free and reduced applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.

- NBVM School will use administrative prerogative judiciously, only after using exhaustive efforts to obtain a completed application from the parent/guardian only with available information on family size and income that falls within approvable guidelines.
- NBVM School will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators to certify eligible students. School liaisons required for homeless, foster, and migrant students shall coordinate with the nutrition department to make sure such students receive free school meals, in accordance with federal law.

Students/parents/guardians may pay for meals in advance or with a check payable to Nativity of Mary School. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student may/will be carried over to the next school year.

Refunds for withdrawn, and graduating students; a written or emailed request for a refund and money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduation at the end of the year will be given the option to transfer to a sibling's account with a written request.

Unclaimed funds must be requested within one school year. Unclaimed funds will then become the property of Nativity of Mary School Food Service Program.

