

Adopted from MSBA/MASA Model Policy 516, Orig. 2017, Rev. 2019
Reviewed:
Revised:

**BLUFFVIEW MONTESSORI SCHOOL
POLICY 534
UNPAID MEAL CHARGES**

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students receive healthy and nutritious meals through Bluffview Montessori School's nutrition program and that Bluffview Montessori School employees, families, and students have a shared understanding of expectations regarding meal charges. The policy seeks to allow students to receive the nutrition they need to stay focused during the school day and minimize identification of students with insufficient funds to pay for school meals as well as to maintain the financial integrity of the school nutrition program.

II. PAYMENT OF MEALS

- A. Students/families have use of a meal account. When the balance becomes low, a notification is sent home. Parents can make a payment in the school office or online.
- B. If Bluffview Montessori School receives school lunch aid under Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, it must make lunch available without charge to all participating students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals regardless of account balance.
- C. Siblings share the same monetary account.

III. LOW OR NEGATIVE ACCOUNT BALANCES – NOTIFICATION

- A. Bluffview Montessori School will make reasonable efforts to notify families when meal account balances are low or fall below zero.
- B. Families will be notified of a low balance once the balance reaches \$6. Families will be notified by email or letter.
- C. Reminders for payment of outstanding student meal balances will not demean or stigmatize any student participating in the school lunch program. A meal will not be taken away from a student with an overdrawn account. Students will receive a fully reimbursable meal in this instance as well, not a reduced meal or a substitution.

IV. UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

- A. Bluffview Montessori School will make reasonable efforts to communicate with families to resolve the matter of unpaid charges. Where appropriate, families may be encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals for their children.
- B. Bluffview Montessori School will make reasonable efforts to collect unpaid meal charges classified as delinquent debt. Unpaid meal charges are designated as delinquent debt when payment is overdue, the debt is considered collectable, and efforts are being made to collect it.
- C. Negative balances not paid prior to the end of the school year, will be turned over to the Head of School or Head of School's designee for collection. Collection options may include, but are not limited to, use of collection agencies, claims in the conciliation court, or any other legal method permitted by law.
- D. Bluffview Montessori School may not enlist the assistance of non Bluffview Montessori School employees, such as volunteers, to engage in debt collection efforts.
- E. Bluffview Montessori School may not deny any student the opportunity to participate in bridging ceremonies or other end of the year activities due to unpaid meal charges.

V. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy and any pertinent supporting information shall be provided in writing (i.e., mail, email, back-to-school packet, student handbook, etc.) to:
 - 1. all households at or before the start of each school year;
 - 2. students and families who transfer to Bluffview Montessori School, at the time of enrollment; and
 - 3. all Bluffview Montessori School personnel who are responsible for enforcing this policy.
- B. Bluffview Montessori School may post the policy on the Bluffview Montessori School's website, in addition to providing the required written notification described above.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 124D.111, Subd. 4

42 U.S.C. § 1751 *et seq.* (Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act)
7 C.F.R. § 210 *et seq.* (School Lunch Program Regulations)
C.F.R. § 220.8 (School Breakfast Program Regulations)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 46-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges:
Local Meal Charge Policies (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 47-2016, Unpaid Meal Charges:
Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments (2016)
USDA Policy Memorandum SP 23-2017, Unpaid Meal Charges:
Guidance and Q&A
Minn. Op. Atty. Gen. 169j (May 14, 2019) (*Letter to Ricker*)