



## Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES

P.O. Box 70 • 4747 Middle Settlement Road • New Hartford, NY 13413-0070  
[www.oneida-boces.org](http://www.oneida-boces.org)

### **Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES LEA #419000000000**

#### **Meal Charge and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan**

##### I. Purpose

The goal of the Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES Food Service Program is to provide student 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 program. The purpose of this policy is to insure compliance with federal requirements for the USDA Child Nutrition Program and New York State Education Law 908, 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 the Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES Food Service Program in a way that does not stigmatize, distress or embarrass students. The provisions of this policy pertain to regular priced reimbursable school breakfast, lunch. The Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES Food Service Program 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 breakfast and lunch meal of their choice each day. Schools operating under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) will serve all meals for free. A la carte items or other similar items must be paid/prepaid.



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Reduced Meal Benefit - Reduced eligible students will be allowed to receive a breakfast of their choice for \$.25 and lunch of their choice for \$.25 each day. A student will be allowed to charge meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. The charged meals offered to students will be the same reimbursable meals that are 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, snacks, drinks, extras or other similar items must be paid/prepaid. (Not applicable to CEP schools.)

Full Pay Students - Students will pay for meals at the school's published paid meal rate each day. A student will be allowed to charge meals to their account after the balance reaches zero. The charged meals offered to students will be the same reimbursable meals that are 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, snacks, drinks, extras or other similar items must be paid/prepaid. (Not applicable to CEP schools.)

### ONGOING 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 the school's training program.

### PARENT NOTIFICATION:

- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student's meal card or account balance is exhausted within 4 days and then every week thereafter.
- Parents/guardians will be notified that a student has accrued meal charges within 4 days of the charge and then every week thereafter. Negative balance letters will be printed by Food Service Staff and sent home weekly by district staff.
- School Districts can elect to set up calls, emails or text messages using a preferred automated notification system (i.e. School Messenger, Parent Square)



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### PARENT OUTREACH:

- School Districts should appoint a designated staff person(s) to act as lead parent contact.
- Designated district staff will communicate with parents/guardians with three or more meal charges to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.
- Designated district 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.
- Designated district 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.
- Food Service Managers will provide confidential student balance lists, Free or Reduced lunch status and/or blank Free and Reduced Lunch Applications as requested by district.

### MINIMIZING STUDENT DISTRESS:

- 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 or work to pay for meals.
- Schools 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.
- Schools will not take any action directed at a pupil to collect unpaid school meal fees.



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- Schools will deal directly with parents/guardians regarding unpaid school meal fees.
- Food Service staff (kitchen managers or cashiers) will be allowed to respond to students if a student requests his or her current account balance.

### ONGOING ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION:

- Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES Food Service Program will conduct direct certification with NYSSIS or using NYSED Roster Upload at least three times per year to maximize free eligibility.
- School staff will provide parents/guardians with free and reduced price application and instructions at the beginning of each school year in school enrollment packet.
- Schools 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.
- Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES Food Service Program will coordinate with the foster, homeless, migrant, runaway coordinators on an ongoing basis to certify eligible students.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance using cash, EZ School Pay ([ezschoolpay.com](http://ezschoolpay.com)) or with a check payable to Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES Food Service Program. 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 e-mailed request for a refund of any money remaining in their account must be submitted. Students who are graduating



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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 the Oneida Herkimer Madison BOCES Food Service Program.