

## 3302 NUTRITION COLLECTION POLICY

### A. Purpose and Background

- (1) National School Lunch, Breakfast, and the After School Snack Program 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.
- (2) 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 regards to money owed for school meals.

### B. Definitions

- (1) **“Automated Meal Payment System”** (COMPASS) means a web based system which 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.
- (2) **“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.**
- (3) **“Delinquent Account”** means a student's meal fund account that does not have adequate funds to cover the meal charges by student/parent. Entheos Academy is responsible 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.
- (4) **“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.

## 3302 Nutrition Collection Policy

- (5) **“Meal Charging”** means allowing students who do not have funds in their account to receive a reimbursable meal, with parents or other sources paying for these meals at a later time. 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.
- (6) **“Parent”** means a student’s parent, legal guardian, or person acting as the parent for school purposes.
- (7) **“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 Entheos Academy board.
- (8) **“Point of Service”** means the place at the end of the line where meal payments and counting of reimbursable meals occurs.
- (9) **“Reduced-Price Meal”** means a meal served to a student whose parents qualify for reduced-price meals.

*(Note to the LEA: Schools may charge less than these amounts but may not charge more and only the set amount is reimbursable to the LEA/school.)*

- (10) **“Reimbursable Meal”** means a meal that meets the USDA requirements and may be claimed for payment from USDA.

### A. Model Policy Components

- (1) Before school begins, parents shall receive information from Entheos Academy:
  - about school meals;
  - stating the prices for the meals;
  - informing parents how they may provide payment for meals;
  - informing parents how their students qualify for reduced-price or free meals;
  - informing parents what students will receive if their meal accounts are delinquent;
  - informing parents of the policy for delinquent accounts; and
  - training parents on the functions of the Automated Payment system (COMPASS).
- (1) Entheos Academy will send reminders of the policy throughout the school year. Entheos Academy may send letters home, send school newsletter reminders, make

## 3302 Nutrition Collection Policy

announcements, make phone calls, send emails or use other reasonable and effective means of communication to contact parents.

- (2) 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.
- (3) **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.**

**a. Special Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

**b. Family Employment Program (FEP)**

**c. Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)**

### **A. Payments and School Verification**

- (1) Entheos Academy must verify at some point in each student's meal service, that the meal is reimbursable or non-reimbursable.
- (2) Entheos Academy shall credit meal payments to the student's account before the meal period for funds collected the day before. This assures all funds are accurately applied to meal accounts in advance of students selecting school meals. Schools will apply payments to the purchase of the current day's meal first, and the payment of past-due accounts second.
- (3) If a student/family qualifies for free meals, no payments are due.
- (4) Entheos does not charge for reduced-priced meals.
- (5) Parents may make payments to the school online using the COMPASS Guardian portal, by mail or in person.. Payments should clearly indicate the account to which the funds should be credited (student's name and amount, if several students attend the school). Entheos Academy accepts online payments, checks, money orders, and cash.

### **A. Identification of Delinquent Accounts**

- (1) Entheos Academy will identify family or student accounts that do not have adequate balances to pay for student meals. Delinquent accounts will be identified daily. Account notice emails will be sent on a daily basis. The school will contact

## 3302 Nutrition Collection Policy

parents, as parents have directed, on the automated meal payment system (COMPASS), or by phone, email, to allow parents 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.

- (2) Entheos Academy will continue to provide full meals to all students and notify parents that the school will use collection efforts to pay for meals. Entheos Academy shall maintain documentation of parent notice.
- (3) 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, the Entheos Academy must use state, local or other funds to cover the cost of the meals. Entheos Academy will provide notice to parents at designated times during the school year of the school’s policy for providing meals to students when accounts are delinquent. Entheos Academy will comply with all applicable state and federal laws in providing meals to students and in notifying parents.

### B. Delinquent Balances and School Procedures

- (1) Entheos Academy will notify parents of students with delinquent balances in their school lunch accounts by such methods as:
  - a. the automated school lunch payment system (COMPASS);
  - b. e-mail;
  - c. telephone conversation with parent from nutrition staff;
  - d. telephone call from front office;
  - e. written notice sent to the parent by mail or carried home by the student in a sealed envelope;
- (2) If the parents have been notified, no payment is received, and the amount owed exceeds \$80, the account may be turned over to a collection agency. Entheos Academy will notify parents at least twice annually concerning their procedures for the collection of past-due accounts.
- (3) If a student repeatedly has no money in the student’s school lunch account and no student meals are provided from home, school officials will consider the circumstances in the home (e.g., potential abuse or neglect, homelessness, etc.) and may contact the Child Protective Services.

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