



612 SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

I. PURPOSE

Spero Academy participates in the Minnesota Free School Meals program as outlined in Minn. Statute 124D.111 Subdivision 1 and Subdivision 1(c). The purpose of this policy is to ensure that school district employees, families, and students have an understanding of meal service and meal charges.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

Spero Academy recognizes the importance of providing students with access to nutritious meals during the school day. Spero Academy participates in the Minnesota Free School Meals Program. While at school, all enrolled students may receive one breakfast and one lunch at no charge regardless of an outstanding meal balance.

Any student who is determined eligible for free or reduced-price meals must be served a reimbursable meal, regardless of unpaid meal charges from previous years. Once a meal is served to any child, it may not be taken back for any reason.

All reimbursable meals offered meet state and federal guidelines. Providing an alternate meal not on the scheduled menu violates Minnesota law (Minn. Statute 124D.111, Subdivision 5), except where a special diet is prescribed by an authorized medical professional for a specific student.

III. DEFINITIONS

a. Point of Service

The Point of Service (POS) is the point at which meals are served to students, students are identified, and meals are counted. Students are identified by name and the POS staff ensures that a complete, reimbursable meal has been served prior to counting the meal.

b. Reimbursable Meal

A meal that meets federal requirements for meal components and dietary specifications (87 FR 6984) This includes whole grain requirements, vegetable subgroups, meat/meat alternates, and fluid milk. School meals must meet these requirements to be counted and claimed for reimbursement.

c. Non-Program Foods

Food items that are not part of the planned breakfast or lunch menu constitute non-program foods and cannot be claimed for reimbursement. At this time, the Spero Academy Nutrition Program does not market, sell, or serve any non-program food items to students.

d. Meal Benefit

Meal Benefit categories include Paid, Reduced-Price, and Free
As of July 1, 2023, school meals are offered to all students at no cost, regardless of meal benefit status.

School nutrition programs receive full reimbursement for reimbursable meals served to all students through state and/or federal funds, depending on meal benefit category:

“Free” meals served to eligible students are covered in full by federal funds.
“Reduced-Price” meals served to eligible students are covered in part through federal funds supplemented by state funds.
“Paid” meals served to eligible students are covered in full by state funds.

Schools must still count reimbursable meals served by meal benefit category to ensure that reimbursement is received from the correct funding source.

IV. ACCOMMODATIONS

Given the unique social, emotional, and cognitive needs of many students, the Spero Academy Nutrition Program recognizes the potential need for an alternative Point of Service.

In some cases, a designated staff person may be appointed to collect a student meal on behalf of a student and serve it to them in another location. This will constitute an alternative Point of Service. This will be allowed only when:

- A. The student is unable to collect the meal at the designated meal time for physical, emotional, or cognitive reasons related to a student's disability;
- B. There is a safety issue preventing the student from participating in congregate dining or collecting the meal in person.

Any designated staff person serving meals to a student at an alternative Point of Service will undergo the required two hours of annual training, including training in Civil Rights for School Nutrition Programs and counting and claiming procedures.

V. COLLECTION OF UNPAID MEAL CHARGES

The decision to work with a debt collections agency to recover debt from unpaid meal charges will be at the discretion of the Board and the Executive Director.

VI. CONFIDENTIALITY

Student meal benefit status must be kept confidential. Student meal benefit status may only be discussed with the household adults listed on the application for educational benefits or direct certification notice and designated program employees who need the information to perform duties, such as reviewing or processing applications for educational benefits and state reporting.

Students shall never be identified by meal benefit category at the POS.

Applications for Educational Benefits will be collected, reviewed, and processed only by a limited number of designated employees for the purpose of performing necessary functions.

All employees with access to student meal benefit status will undergo annual training on confidentiality and disclosure.

VII. COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

This Policy shall be available on the website under Policies and on the School Nutrition Program page. The Policy will be included in any information sent to all households at the beginning of the year regarding school meals, ordering, and the application for educational benefits.

VIII. USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Legal References:

§Minn. Stat. 124D.111 Sub. 1

§Minn. Stat. 124D.111, Sub. 5

87 FR 6984 Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains and Sodium. Feb. 7, 2022, effective July 1, 2022.

Cross References: List of relevant MSBA/MASA policies

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 534 School Meals Policy