

North Tonawanda City School District

Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Plan

1. North Tonawanda City School District shall provide our students with the student's choice of a reimbursable meal, if the student requests one. Charging of items outside of the reimbursable meals (i.e., a la carte items, adult meals, etc.) is expressly prohibited.
2. Parents and Guardians may notify the SFA that they do not want their child to charge a meal upon request. To do this, please send in a note to the cafeteria staff or call (716) 807-3655 X 3503.
3. The foodservice and school staff will be trained to ensure that the school's policy is implemented correctly and consistently. This will be covered at the beginning of each school year, and throughout the year as needed. The training may consist of using the NYSED Webinar, written and verbal instruction provided by the district including ongoing eligibility certification for free or reduced price meals. Each employee will be required to sign a statement of understanding. The district will also note compliance on our yearly On-Site School Review each February.
4. The district will provide affected parents or guardians assistance to establish eligibility for reduced price or free meals for eligible children. The district will offer assistance in the form of an informational letter sent home with charge letters, and then by a phone call when the charges are above \$8.00 or the equivalent of five meals whichever is less.
5. North Tonawanda City School District will inform the parent or guardian that their child's account balance is exhausted and unpaid meal charges are due. The notification may include a repayment schedule, but the school will not charge any interest or fees in connection with the meals charged. Convenience fees associated with the use of the school's secure on-line payment system, MySchoolBucks, is allowable, as per NYS. Charge letters will be mailed home every 14-21 days and phone calls will be made as needed or when charges are above \$8.00 or the equivalent of five meals whichever is less.
6. Our communication procedure to encourage eligible families to enroll children for free or reduced price meals that includes a process for determining eligibility when a student owes money for five or more meals, wherein North Tonawanda City School District shall:
 - Make every attempt to determine if a student is directly certified and eligible for free meals
 - In addition to sending home the income application at the beginning of the year, make two additional attempts to encourage the parent or guardian to complete an income application on behalf of the child
 - Contact the parent or guardian to offer assistance to complete the application and to determine if there are other factors of why the child does not have sufficient access to food or funds to purchase a meal and offer other assistance as appropriate

7. We will decrease student distress or embarrassment by not doing the following prohibited actions:

- Announcing or publicizing the names of children with unpaid meal charges
- Sending clearly marked notices home with children who have an outstanding balance
- Using hand stamps, wristbands, stickers, or other physical markers to identify children with outstanding meal charges
- Requiring children with unpaid meal charges to do chores or other work
- Throwing a child's meal in the trash
- Take any action directed at the student to collect unpaid meal charges
- Discuss any outstanding meal debt in the presence of other students
- Serving alternate meals (i.e., cheese sandwich)
- Using a debt collector

8. The district will ensure all eligible students are identified as eligible for free or reduced price meals by:

- Maximizing the use of Statewide Direct Certification (DCMP) by accessing the DCMP data at least monthly. The district will consider the effective date of eligibility for free school meals benefits to be the date of the automated data matching file which first identifies the child as eligible. See SP51-2014: Eligibility Effective Date for Directly Certified Students for more details.
- Providing a copy of the income application in each student's enrollment packet and/ or include written instructions of how to complete the application or to request a paper application at no cost. Clearly instruct parents/guardians that they are not required to complete the application if they have already been or are eligible to be directly certified.
- The district will provide at least two additional free and reduced price applications throughout the school year to families identified as owing meal charges.
- Encourage families to apply for free and reduced price meals and provide materials in a language and at a reading level families can understand. SFAs may establish the date of an application's submission as the effective date of eligibility.
- The district will coordinate with the school liaisons to ensure all migrant, foster, homeless and runaway children are immediately certified for free meals.
- In extenuating circumstances, North Tonawanda City School District may complete an application on behalf of a child given sufficient cause and backup documentation supporting the child's eligibility. See federal regulations 7 CFR, Part 245.6 (d) for additional guidance regarding administrative prerogative.

Additional Eligibility Requirements and Recommendations:

- North Tonawanda City School District will provide a 30-day carryover of eligibility for free and reduced price students from the previous school year during the first 30 operating days of a new school year, or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever is first.
- Students transferring from a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2 (P2) participating school to a non-participating school will be provided 30-day free eligibility or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first.
- North Tonawanda City School District will accept the free and reduced price eligibility from transfer students.
- North Tonawanda City School District will maximize the use of CEP and P2 where appropriate.
- At the discretion of North Tonawanda City School District, the non-profit school food service account funds may be used to lower or eliminate the reduced price meal cost to the student.

Students/Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance via MySchoolBucks.com or with a check payable to North Tonawanda City School District. Further details are available on our webpage at ntschoools.org. 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 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 North Tonawanda City School District Food Service Program.

The prohibition against meal shaming legislation does not intend to allow for the unlimited accrual of debt. North Tonawanda City School District will also ensure that the non-profit foodservice account is reimbursed for all outstanding meal charges by no later than June 30th of each school year.

Funds used to reimburse the foodservice account will be taken from a non-federal source such as the school's general fund. All funds recouped after the non-profit foodservice account is made whole will be deposited into the general fund or other account used to replenish the school foodservice account. The SFA will maintain adequate documentation to substantiate the transfer of funds for the equivalent of all unpaid meal debt to the school food service account each year.