



Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

Park Office  
Center

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DATE: May 10, 2017

MEMO CODE: SP 29-2017

SUBJECT: 2017 Edition: *Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools*

TO: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs  
All Regions

State Directors  
Child Nutrition Programs  
All States

The school meal programs aim to provide nutritious meals to children during the school day. Children may receive breakfast and lunch at no charge if they are categorically eligible for free meals or if they qualify for free meals based on Federal poverty guidelines. Children who do not qualify for free meals may purchase meals at a subsidized cost, at either the reduced price or paid rate. Sometimes, however, children who do not qualify for free meals would like a breakfast or lunch, but do not have money in their account or in hand to cover the cost of the meal at the time of the meal service.

*Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools* is a best practice guide designed to support State and local stakeholders working every day to address this issue. Throughout the guide, readers will hear from superintendents, principals, school food service professionals, and others who have shared their own challenges and successes addressing unpaid meal charges. This edition replaces the version released in September 2016, SP 58-2016: *2016 Edition: Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools*. Information in this version that is new or significantly revised is highlighted.

### **Unpaid Meal Charges Policy Guidance**

*Overcoming the Unpaid Meal Challenge: Proven Strategies from Our Nation's Schools* is a companion piece to other policy memoranda related to unpaid meal charges, including the following:

- SP 23-2017: Unpaid Meal Charges: Guidance and Q&As, March 23, 2017, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/unpaid-meal-charges-guidance-and-q>

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- SP 46-2016: Unpaid Meal Charges: Local Meal Charge Policies, July 8, 2016, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/unpaid-meal-charges-local-meal-charge-policies>
- SP 47-2016: Unpaid Meal Charges: Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meal Payments, July 8, 2016, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/unpaid-meal-charges-clarification-collection-delinquent-meal-payments>

Other resources related to unpaid meal charges may be found on the Food and Nutrition Service Unpaid Meal Charges website: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/unpaid-meal-charges>.

State agencies are reminded to distribute this memorandum and attachments to Program operators immediately. Program operators should direct any questions concerning this guidance to their State agency. State agency contact information is available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/school-meals-contacts>. State agencies with questions should contact the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

**Original Signed**

Angela Kline  
Director  
Policy and Program Development Division  
Child Nutrition Programs

Attachment