

POWERS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL UNPAID MEAL CHARGES POLICY:

- The PCHS School Meal Program makes wholesome, nutritious, and tasty meals available to all of our students, with the expectation that families that can afford to contribute will pay for their children's meals.
- Every year, we work to ensure all eligible students are certified for free or reduced price meals. Sometimes, students who are not certified for free meals enter the cafeteria without the funds needed to purchase a breakfast or lunch. This is a difficult situation for the child and our staff.
- The PCHS School Meal Programs must be financially self-sustaining. We must balance our desire to provide nutritious meals for all children with the demands of "staying in the black." This is because school lunch debt impacts our ability to serve all children high-quality, nutritious meals.
- USDA gives local schools like ours discretion to determine how to handle unpaid meal charges based on local conditions and available resources. *Students may charge up to 2 breakfast and 2 lunch meals and not exceed -\$15.00 in lunch account balances. All charges are expected to be paid in full within 14 days from the date of the debt occurrence.*
- Our policy ensures a consistent and transparent approach to situations where children do not have the funds needed to pay for their meal, and helps us maintain a financially sound program.
 - We also work to prevent unpaid meal charges by improving communication with families, simplifying our payment options, and proactively reminding families to add money to their child's account before they reach a negative balance. *Currently families whose lunch balance has fallen to -\$15.00 or below receive email notifications every day. Included in the email are payment options and instructions to the MealMagic link to apply online for meal benefits if needed. Payments may be made online at the Meal Magic Link (posted online under school lunches) or by check or cash in the business office. Payment plans can be arranged through the business office in conjunction with administration. Non responsive families will receive both a letter in the mail and a phone call from the food service director with continued communication until the balance is zero or positive.*
 - No one wants to cause a child distress during the school day, and we are continually working to prevent "school lunch shaming" in our cafeteria. *Students will not be refused a meal or will never be given an alternative meal even if their lunch balance is in the negative. **Students will not however, be allowed to charge a second entrée, second meal or snacks and beverages.***
 - *Starting the second Monday in May, PCHS students will not be allowed to charge anything. Signs will be posted a minimum of 2 weeks in advance to notify students. Senior students will not be allowed to charge anything beginning the last Monday of April of each school year.*
- Our goal is to provide children with the well-balanced nutrition they need to be healthy and stay focused during the school day. We welcome feedback about what we can do to improve our local meal charge policy. We hope our policy will continue to evolve to better meet the needs of schools, families, and children.
 - Any charges not paid by June 30th will be handled in accordance with the PCHS Bad Debt Policy, which may result in further collection activity on behalf of Powers Catholic High School.