



Al-Mamoor School

EST. 2001

Meal Charge and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Policy

Protecting student access, dignity, confidentiality, and equitable participation in school meals

Policy owner	Effective date	Review cycle	Approval
School Administration and Food Service Director	September 2026	At least annually and whenever requirements change	

Al-Mamoor School

Established 2001

Purpose and Scope

Al-Mamoor School is committed to ensuring that every student can access a nutritious school breakfast, lunch, and any school-sponsored reimbursable meal or snack without being embarrassed, singled out, or treated differently because of a family's financial circumstances. This policy establishes fair procedures for meal charges, account communication, payment assistance, eligibility outreach, and the protection of student dignity.

This policy applies to students, families, school administrators, food-service staff, teachers, volunteers, and vendors involved in school meal service. It covers regular-price reimbursable meals and snacks. A la carte items, adult meals, second meals, and other non-reimbursable items must be paid for in advance or at the time of purchase and may not be charged under this policy.

Core Policy Statement

A student will not be denied a regular reimbursable meal because the student's parent or guardian has an unpaid meal balance, has forgotten payment, or has not yet completed an eligibility application. Meal account matters will be handled privately and directly with the parent or guardian. No student will be publicly identified, embarrassed, disciplined, or assigned a different meal because of an unpaid balance.

Guiding Principles

- Student access to a complete reimbursable meal takes priority over collection activity at the point of service.
- Families will receive clear, timely, and respectful information about eligibility, account balances, payment options, and available assistance.
- School staff will protect confidentiality and use neutral, non-stigmatizing procedures.
- The school will make reasonable efforts to identify students who may qualify for free or reduced-price meals.
- Collection practices will never interfere with instruction, participation, safety, or a student's dignity.

1. Meal Benefit and Payment Rules

Meal benefits will be provided and charged according to the student's approved eligibility status and the school's current published rates. The school will follow applicable USDA, NYSED, and local requirements when determining eligibility, reimbursement, and meal pricing.

Student status	Regular reimbursable meal	Non-reimbursable items
Free meal eligible	The student may select the available reimbursable breakfast, lunch, or approved snack at no charge.	A la carte, second meals, adult meals, and other extras must be paid for in advance or at purchase.
Reduced-price eligible	The student will receive the meal at the applicable reduced-price rate, subject to current program rules. If the school operates a program that provides the meal at no charge, the student will not be charged.	A la carte, second meals, adult meals, and other extras must be paid for in advance or at purchase.
Full-pay	The student may select a reimbursable meal at the school's published rate. If the account lacks funds, the meal may be recorded as a charge under this policy.	A la carte, second meals, adult meals, and other extras must be paid for in advance or at purchase.

Parents or guardians may provide written instructions about meal selections or account restrictions. Those instructions will be applied only when they are consistent with applicable program requirements and do not cause the student to be denied a regular reimbursable meal or publicly identified.

Meal Charges

A meal charge is an unpaid amount created when a student receives an allowable reimbursable meal and the family's account does not contain sufficient funds or the applicable meal fee has not been paid. Charges will be recorded accurately and communicated to the parent or guardian. Staff will not use the point of service to pressure a student to collect the balance.

2. Prohibition Against Meal Shaming

Meal shaming is prohibited at Al-Mamoor School. Meal shaming includes any action, statement, signal, practice, or assignment that reveals or implies that a student has an unpaid meal balance or receives free or reduced-price meals.

Prohibited practices

- Announcing a student's balance, eligibility status, or meal debt in front of other students or staff who do not need the information.
- Refusing to serve, removing, discarding, or replacing a reimbursable meal because the student cannot pay or has an unpaid balance.
- Serving a different or visibly inferior meal to a student because of an unpaid balance.
- Marking, tagging, stamping, wristbanding, isolating, or otherwise identifying a student for meal debt or meal eligibility.
- Requiring a student to perform chores, work, cleanup, or another task to earn or repay a meal.
- Sending a student away from the meal line, delaying service, or requiring the student to speak publicly about payment.
- Withholding food already served, taking food away, or directing collection activity toward the student.
- Using threatening, insulting, sarcastic, or humiliating language related to meal payment or eligibility.

Required staff conduct

- Serve students through the same orderly process regardless of payment status.
- Use neutral language and private communication when an account issue must be addressed.
- Direct all balance questions, payment requests, and application assistance to the parent or guardian.
- Protect eligibility and account information from unnecessary disclosure.
- Report suspected meal shaming or a repeated collection problem to the Food Service Director or School Administration promptly.

3. Communication with Parents and Guardians

The school will communicate directly with parents or guardians about meal balances. Notices will be factual, respectful, and designed to help the family resolve the issue without placing responsibility on the student.

Timing or trigger	School response
Within 5 school days of the first charge or when the account becomes exhausted	Send a private notice identifying the balance, explaining the payment process, and providing information about free and reduced-price meal applications.
Every 3 school days or at another regular interval established by the Food Service Director while a balance remains unpaid	Provide a follow-up reminder through the school's approved communication method. Communications must remain private and non-stigmatizing.
Five or more meal charges	Make documented outreach to the parent or guardian to discuss eligibility, application assistance, payment options, and any household circumstances affecting access to funds.

Timing or trigger	School response
Family requests assistance	Offer help completing the meal application, explain paper and electronic options, and refer the family to appropriate school or community resources when available.

The school may use written notices, secure electronic messages, telephone calls, or other approved communication methods. Staff will not send meal-debt information through a method that exposes the student's status to other students or families.

4. Eligibility Outreach and Certification

Al-Mamoor School will take active steps to ensure that eligible students receive the meal benefits for which they qualify.

- Provide free and reduced-price meal applications and instructions in the enrollment packet and at the beginning of each school year.
- Explain the electronic application process and provide instructions for requesting a paper application at no cost.
- Use available direct-certification processes and updated eligibility data, as permitted by NYSED and applicable program rules, to maximize access to benefits.
- Provide at least two additional application opportunities during the school year to families identified as having meal charges or who may otherwise need assistance.
- Make at least two documented attempts to contact the parent or guardian of a student with five or more meal charges and offer assistance with the application.
- Use administrative discretion only carefully and only when permitted by applicable requirements, after reasonable efforts to obtain a completed application and when available household information supports eligibility.
- Coordinate with the school's homeless, foster-care, migrant, and runaway-student liaisons so eligible students receive meal benefits without delay and without disclosure of their status.

The school will not require a family to disclose private financial circumstances to cafeteria staff or in front of students. Eligibility information will be handled by authorized personnel.

5. Account Funding and Payment Options

Families may add funds to a student meal account through the payment methods approved and communicated by Al-Mamoor School, such as the school's online payment portal, check, or another authorized method. Checks should identify the student and indicate that the payment is for school meals.

- Families are encouraged to maintain a positive account balance when possible.
- Payments will be credited to the correct student account and recorded accurately.
- Funds remaining at the end of the school year will be carried forward when permitted by school procedures and applicable program rules.
- A family may request a balance review if it believes a payment or charge was recorded incorrectly.
- Account information will be shared only with the student's parent or guardian and authorized school personnel.

Refunds and Transfers

For a student who withdraws or graduates, a parent or guardian may submit a written or approved electronic request for a refund of money remaining in the student's account. A graduating student's balance may be transferred to a sibling's account when the family submits a written request and the transfer is permitted by school procedures.

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Requests for refunds or transfers should be submitted within one school year of withdrawal or graduation. After the applicable period, funds that remain unclaimed may be handled according to the school's financial procedures and applicable law. The school will make reasonable efforts to notify families about unclaimed balances before they are closed.

6. Staff Training and Responsibilities

All employees and volunteers involved in meal service, student supervision, account communication, or eligibility administration will receive training before assuming these duties and at least annually thereafter. Additional training will be provided when procedures or program requirements change.

Responsible group	Required practice
Food Service Director	Train staff; maintain procedures; monitor charges and communications; ensure meal service remains nondiscriminatory; review records and corrective actions.
Cafeteria and kitchen staff	Serve reimbursable meals consistently; protect privacy; avoid public discussion of accounts; document service accurately; report concerns.
School office and administrative staff	Maintain secure account and eligibility records; communicate with families privately; coordinate applications and payment assistance.
Teachers and other staff	Do not discuss meal debt or eligibility with students or peers; refer questions to authorized personnel; report suspected meal shaming.
School Administration	Ensure resources, oversight, training, and corrective action; review this policy at least annually.

Training topics

- Meal benefit categories and current meal prices.
- When a charge may be recorded and which items may not be charged.
- Confidentiality, neutral language, and prohibited meal-shaming practices.
- Parent notification, outreach, and application-assistance procedures.
- Direct certification and coordination for students in protected circumstances.
- How to document and report an incident or procedural failure.

7. Handling Concerns and Corrective Action

Any student, parent or guardian, employee, or community member may report a concern about meal access, account communication, or possible meal shaming to the Food Service Director, school office, school nurse, or School Administration. Reports will be addressed promptly and respectfully.

Concern	Initial response
Student was identified, embarrassed, or treated differently	Stop the practice, ensure the student receives the regular reimbursable meal, notify the Food Service Director, document the incident, and contact the family privately as appropriate.

Concern	Initial response
Meal was denied or discarded because of inability to pay	Restore access to the meal when possible, review the point-of-service procedure, document the incident, and provide staff retraining.
Family did not receive notices or application information	Verify contact information, send the required materials, offer assistance, and document the outreach.
Account balance appears inaccurate	Review the payment and charge history, correct verified errors, and notify the parent or guardian of the outcome.

Repeated or serious violations may result in a written corrective-action plan, additional training, reassignment of duties, or other administrative action consistent with school procedures.

8. Records, Privacy, and Review

The school will maintain secure records of meal charges, payments, notices, parent outreach, applications, eligibility determinations, training, complaints, and corrective actions according to applicable USDA, NYSED, health, financial, and school record-retention requirements.

Meal account and eligibility records are confidential. Staff will access or share them only when necessary to administer meals, provide accommodations, communicate with the family, complete required program administration, or respond to an authorized review.

The Food Service Director and School Administration will review this policy at least annually and whenever applicable USDA, NYSED, local health, or school requirements change. The review will consider student access, unpaid balances, outreach completion, complaints, incidents, staff training, and the effectiveness of the school's anti-shaming safeguards.

Appendix A Quick Staff Checklist

Always do	Never do
Serve the regular reimbursable meal regardless of an unpaid balance.	Announce or discuss a student's balance or eligibility publicly.
Speak privately and directly with parents or guardians about account matters.	Deny, discard, downgrade, or delay a reimbursable meal because of debt.
Use neutral language and protect confidentiality.	Use labels, handstamps, wristbands, chores, or visible signals for meal debt.
Offer applications, assistance, and payment information.	Ask the student to collect money or explain the family's finances.
Report concerns and document corrective action.	Treat a student differently because the family owes meal charges.

Appendix B Parent and Guardian Notice Elements

A balance notice should state the student's account balance, the date or period of the charges, how to make a payment, how to request a balance review, how to apply for free or reduced-price meals, how to request application assistance, and whom to contact with questions. Notices should not contain language that blames, threatens, or embarrasses the student.

IMPLEMENTATION AMENDMENT

Al-Mamoor School Meal Charge and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming Policy

Operational controls and assessment evidence | Effective September 30, 2026

This amendment supplements the approved policy and is intended to make implementation, monitoring, and assessment evidence clear and repeatable. If any prior wording is inconsistent with this amendment, this implementation language controls.

Implementation Ownership

The Food Service Director is responsible for day-to-day implementation, staff training, account notices, outreach, incident documentation, and monthly monitoring. The School Administration provides oversight, reviews corrective actions, and confirms the annual policy review. Only authorized personnel may access student account or eligibility information.

Required Records and Monitoring

- Annual staff training roster showing that all employees and volunteers involved in meals, supervision, account communication, or eligibility administration completed the required training.
- Secure account and meal-charge records, parent notices, application assistance records, direct-certification or eligibility outreach records, and payment corrections.
- A meal-access and dignity log documenting any concern, date, student protection steps, notification, corrective action, and closure. Student names should be protected and the log should be accessible only to authorized personnel.
- Monthly review confirming that no student was denied, delayed, downgraded, isolated, publicly identified, or required to work because of meal debt or eligibility status.
- Quarterly review of charges, notices, outreach, complaints, incidents, training completion, and corrective-action trends, reported to School Administration.

Response Standards

Situation	Required response
Possible meal shaming or denial	Immediately restore access to the regular reimbursable meal, stop the practice, notify the Food Service Director, document the concern, and notify the family privately as appropriate.
Account or eligibility concern	Review the record within one school day, correct verified errors, provide application or payment assistance, and document the communication.
Repeated or serious violation	Create a written corrective-action plan within five school days, provide retraining, assign a responsible administrator, and verify completion.
Training gap	Complete make-up training before the employee resumes unsupervised meal-service or account duties and retain the attendance record.

Measurable Goals and Next Steps

Area	Goal and evidence target
Student access	Maintain 100% access to a regular reimbursable meal regardless of unpaid balance, incomplete application, or inability to pay.
Privacy and dignity	Maintain zero substantiated meal-shaming incidents and document review of every reported concern.
Family communication	Send required private notices and outreach on schedule and retain a record of each communication attempt.

Staff readiness	Achieve 100% annual training completion for covered staff and volunteers before or immediately upon assignment.
Corrective action	Close identified procedural gaps within five school days unless a documented reason and revised deadline are approved by School Administration.

Assessment Readiness Statement

For assessment purposes, the meal-charge and anti-shaming requirements may be recorded as Fully Met when the annual training roster, monthly monitoring records, outreach records, incident log, and corrective-action file demonstrate completion of the safeguards above.