

# **Great Hearts Louisiana Meal Charge Policy**

## Purpose

The goal of Great Hearts Harveston, in partnership with our food service vendor, is to provide students with nutritious and delicious food each day. However, unpaid meal charges place a financial burden on our schools and affect the classroom budget. The purpose of this policy is to remain compliant with the Child Nutrition Program, to provide clear guidelines for the collection of payments and outstanding student meal balances, and to establish consistent meal account procedures throughout Great Hearts campuses.

## Policy

Except as otherwise provided by Federal law, it is the responsibility of the guardians to provide their students with their meals. They can do this in one of 3 ways:

1. Send the meals with the child to school.
2. Pay for meals to be purchased at the school.
3. Apply and receive approval of eligibility to receive free or reduced meals

A meal account is created for every student upon enrollment. Since studies show that improved nutrition has a direct impact on academic performance, memory, and other positive learning behaviors, Great Hearts will not deny a student a meal unless a guardian has specifically requested us to do so. If a guardian needs to restrict student purchases for financial or any other reason, they may do so online or by contacting the school. Great Hearts also reserves the right to prohibit or limit account purchases when a student account is more than fifty dollars (\$50.00) overdrawn, regardless of guardian permissions. To maintain the financial integrity of Great Hearts Child Nutrition Program, Great Hearts will privately contact the student's guardian in writing through email, text, and/or telephone to arrange for a payment plan for the unpaid meal charges. If the guardian does not respond or fails to honor the agreed-upon payment plan, Great Hearts may, at its sole discretion, discontinue providing a meal to the student after providing the guardian with written, private notice via email, text, and/or mail. In this event, Great Hearts will ensure that the student's eligibility status is not overtly identified.

The same policy will apply to faculty participating in the school lunch program, except that faculty will have a limit of negative twenty dollars (\$20.00). Visiting adults must prepay for their meals at the front desk before purchase. Adults and staff are not allowed to use a student's account to charge for any items not intended for the student.

Guardians are responsible for student purchases. To help ensure accuracy at the point of sale, students will use a barcode card, issued by the school, to verify their identity. Guardians can monitor purchases through the meal service app or online. Statements of activity are available online or upon request.

Guardians should monitor balances on the meal program website or app. If a guardian does not have online access, they can contact the school for balance inquiries and students can ask for their balance at

the point of sale. Notification of negative account balances will be provided on a regular basis by email or phone. Low balance alerts are emailed as well.

Great Hearts is committed to providing meals for students who choose to participate in the program. However, it is the responsibility of the guardians to satisfy all financial obligations to the lunch program in a timely manner. Guardians can pay online or by check (preferred) at their campus. Checks are to be made payable to the campus, with their student's name(s) and "lunch money" in the subject line. Great Hearts Harveston strongly encourages guardians to pre-pay for their student's meals.

If a guardian is unable to provide a meal for their child, they are encouraged to complete the application for free or reduced meals (available in English and Spanish) online or at any Great Hearts Harveston school. Applications can be completed at **any time** during the school year and are effective from the date of submission until thirty (30) days into the next school year (to give guardians time to renew). If determined to be eligible, children can receive one (1) regular breakfast meal and one (1) regular lunch meal each at a free or reduced rate (depending on eligibility level). Any extra entrées, incomplete meals, second meals, or a la carte purchases (milk only, cookies, chips, etc.) are charged at the full price rate, no matter the student's eligibility.

**A positive balance will automatically rollover to the following school year for returning students.** A refund request must be submitted in writing for any positive or remaining balances for current, graduated, or withdrawn students. If a student withdraws or graduates with a negative balance, guardians are still responsible for payment.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

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/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.