

Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom PCS
Meal Charge Policy

Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom PCS (Stokes School) ensures that students have access to nutritious meals to support their academic success. Stokes Kitchen serves breakfast, lunch, snack, and supper daily. The students receives healthy and delicious meals for breakfast, lunch, and after school supper each school day. The Stokes Kitchen Professional chefs prepare all meals in-house using minimally processed ingredients from local farmers and suppliers. There is a fresh salad bar available to students at no cost every day. We also offer fresh fruit four times a day: at breakfast, snack, lunch, and supper. We cater to students who have specific dietary restrictions such as gluten, dairy, and egg allergies, and there is a vegetarian option at every meal.

Breakfast is available to students every morning from 7:30 am until 10:50 am.

Breakfast, snack and supper is free for all students. Lunch is available to students every day at \$3.00 per meal. Families are encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meals. Applications for free and reduced-price meals can be acquired online on our website and in our main office. Complete the [FRL Form Linked Here \(English\)](#) and submit the completed form in person at Stokes School's receptionist desk.

All students in income-eligible households are eligible for school meal benefits regardless of a child's immigration status. Stokes School does not release information for immigration-related purposes in the usual course of operating Child Nutrition Programs.

Stokes School participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and adheres to the guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

All families can access Stokes School's Meal Charge Policy at any moment on the website. The Meal Charge Policy will be communicated to all staff before the first day of school, and school/staff members responsible for policy enforcement will receive training on meal charge policy, and record of training will be maintained as part of the professional development portfolio.

The Meal Charge Policy is for students with insufficient funds for school meals and delinquent accounts in the school nutrition program. All SFAs operating the Federal school meal programs are required to have a written meal charge policy. This policy intends to establish a process and procedure to handle situations when children eligible for full-price meal benefits have insufficient funds to pay for school meals; as well as for the collection of unpaid meal charges and delinquent account debt.

You can find more information about this US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requirement at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/unpaid-meal-charges>.

Scope of responsibility:

- The food service department, Director of Finance, Director of Operations
- The Parent/Guardian: Immediate payment

Communicating the Policy

- The written meal charge policy will be communicated to households by posting on www.ewstokes.org website, including in the student information packet distributed on the first day of school and to all transfer students during the school year, and attaching to the Lunch Form.
- The written meal charge policy will be communicated to all staff before the first day of school.

Administration

- Families are encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price school meals. For assistance to complete the form, contact:

STOKES SCHOOL LOCATION	NAME	TITLE	PHONE NUMBER
Brookland	Mariam Orantes	Office Manager	202-265-7237
East End	Nancy Cruz	Office Manager	202-975-2100

- Families are able and encouraged to pre-pay for meals. Money is accepted in the school office or online.
- Students can charge for lunch even if they are unable to pay for their meal at the time of the meal service. Students will receive a reimbursable meal, and there is no limit on the food they can select.
- At no time will a child be denied a meal because of an outstanding balance.
- Students with a small number of charges will be permitted to accumulate a larger debt before Stokes School pursues recovery.
- There is no limit to the number of charges or dollar limit allowed before requiring payment of the debt.

Notifying the Household of Low Balance

- Families will be notified for low balances through monthly invoices via email, US mail, and letters sent home with the student.
- Resources are available to assist families with paying for their children's meals or debts. This includes a payment plan and working at the school to pay off the balance.
- Notifications to households will include the number of unpaid meal charges, expected payment dates, the consequences of non-payment and where to go for questions or assistance.
- The consequences for non-payment will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- The persons responsible for managing unpaid meal charges is Fresia Cortes, Director of Operations 202-975-2100 or fresiac@ewstokes.org.

Delinquent debt is allowable in the School nutrition program and may be carried over to one successive school year.

- Delinquent meal charges are managed with monthly invoices, reminders, and payment plans.

- Monthly invoices will include detail on unpaid meal charges, expected payment dates, and collection efforts.
- Repayment plans, with payment levels and due dates appropriate to a family's circumstance, will be considered on a case by case basis.
- The personnel responsible for managing delinquent meal charges is:
Fresia Cortes, Director of Operations
202-975-2100

Collection procedures for Delinquent and Bad Debt

Bad debt is defined as delinquent debt that is deemed uncollectible at the end of the school year. Bad debt is unallowable in the SNP and cannot be carried over to the next school year. Funds resulting from bad debt cannot be recovered using SNP funds and must be offset by non-federal sources.

The Director of Operations will initiate the household debt collection procedures. Families that fail to repay a debt will not be able to participate in aftercare services until the debt is paid off. There is no cumulative dollar threshold to escalate the collection method.

At the end of the school year, the Director of Operations and Director of Finance will determine where the achievement of program purposes would be jeopardized by the diversion of staff time and effort to collect payment. Also, they will evaluate all delinquent debt for conversion to bad debt. Bad debt will be restored to the NSFSA from the EW Stokes PCS's operating account before the end of the same fiscal year.

Efforts to collect delinquent and/or bad debt will be handled by:

- a. Sending Letters
- b. Consequences

Assistance to Households

Households with questions or needing assistance may contact Fresia Cortes, Director of Operations 202-975-2100 or fresiac@ewstokes.org.