**Guidance on Fees for Electronic Payment Services in the School Meal Programs**

**(SP 18-2025)**

**New Rules About Paying for School Meals Online**

The USDA has shared updated rules for schools that let parents/guardians pay for their student’s school meals using an online payment system. Some online payment systems charge electronic payment fees when parents/guardians add money to their student’s meal account using online payment systems.

**Here’s what’s important to know:**

* Schools can charge fees for electronic payment services (like online payments) to add money to student meal accounts. However, this is only allowed if the school also offers a free and easily accessible way for parents/guardians to add money to these accounts, like sending cash or checks to their student’s school.
* Schools must clearly tell families all the ways they can pay for their students’ meals and any electronic payment fees that might apply to pay for their students’ meals if the parents/guardians choose to utilize an online payment system.
* The information about how to provide payment to a student’s meal account should be shared on the school website, in emails, on menus, and when your student’s account is running low on funds.

**Good to know:**

* It’s still a good idea for schools to try not to charge any electronic payment fees to place money on a student’s meal account.
* If there are electronic payment fees, paying with a bank account usually costs less than using a credit card. You can check with your software provider to ask if this type of electronic payment is allowable in their system.
* Schools can also use special funds or donations to help cover electronic payment fees. Covering the cost of electronic payment fees for parents/guardians to use an online payment system is an allowable cost to the nonprofit school food service account.

**For further information:** [**Guidance on Fees for Electronic Payment Services in the School Meal Programs | Food and Nutrition Service**](https://www.fns.usda.gov/schoolmeals/guidance-fees-electronic-payment-services)