

Overcoming Unpaid Meal Charges: The Fully Belly Fund



Susan Patton March 2, 2020

Today's Training

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Local Meal Charge Policy

All school food authorities (SFAs) operating the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast Program must develop a meal charge policy

SFAs have discretion in developing the specifics of their policies

USDA Requirement: Record Keeping



SFAs must provide the policy to the State agency during the Administrative Review



SFAs must maintain documentation of policy communication methods

Policy Communication Plan

How and when will families be notified of the policy?

How and when will families transferring to the SFA mid-year be notified of the policy?

How will staff members responsible for policy enforcement be notified of the policy?

Additional Communication Options



“Send home” folder



School website or social media



Student handbooks



Newsletters, cafeteria menus, etc.

What do you do to prevent unpaid meal charges?



Prevent Unpaid Meal Charges



Reach All
Eligible Children

- Provide application assistance, especially for families with language or literacy barriers
- Improve direct certification systems

Reach Children Mid-Year



Remind families they
may submit an
application at any time



Determine whether
children **may be eligible**
for free meals

Reach Children Mid-Year



Accept prior eligibility status
for transfer students

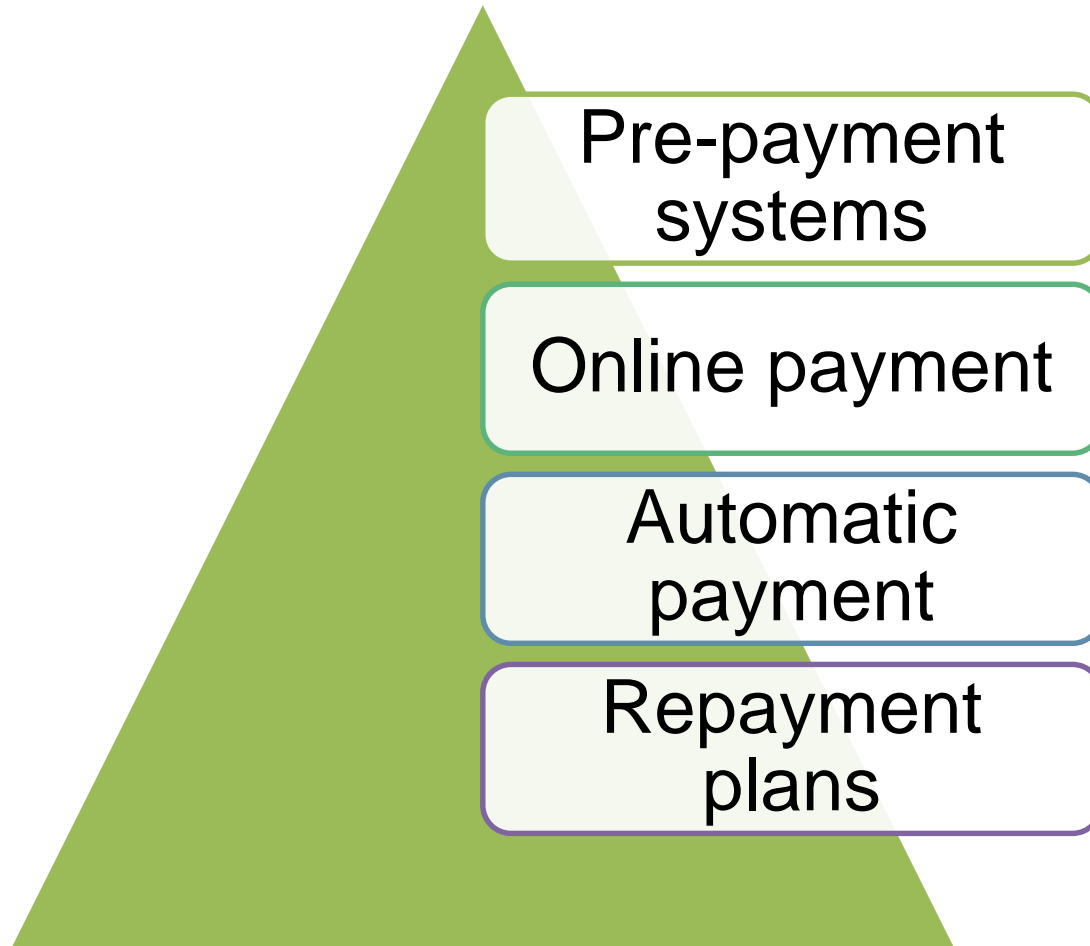


Free breakfast for all



School does not charge
reduced-price fee

Provide Payment Options



Provide Payment Reminders

Encourage families to track spending

Remind families of a low balance **BEFORE** the account goes negative

Make sure contact information is current

How do you prevent lunch shaming?



Prevent Lunch Shaming

Communicate privately with families about a child's outstanding balance

Communicate payment reminders directly and discreetly to adults in the household

Send payment reminders in a plain, white envelope

Avoid Singling Out Students

Do not throw a child's meal in the trash if they are unable to pay!

Do not identify children with meal charges using hand stamps, stickers, or other visual markers!

Aim for High Quality Alternate Meals

Do not serve alternate meals that single out children with unpaid meal charges!



What non-federal resources did you use to overcome unpaid meal balances?



Overcoming Unpaid Meals Challenges



Non-Federal Resources



School district's general fund



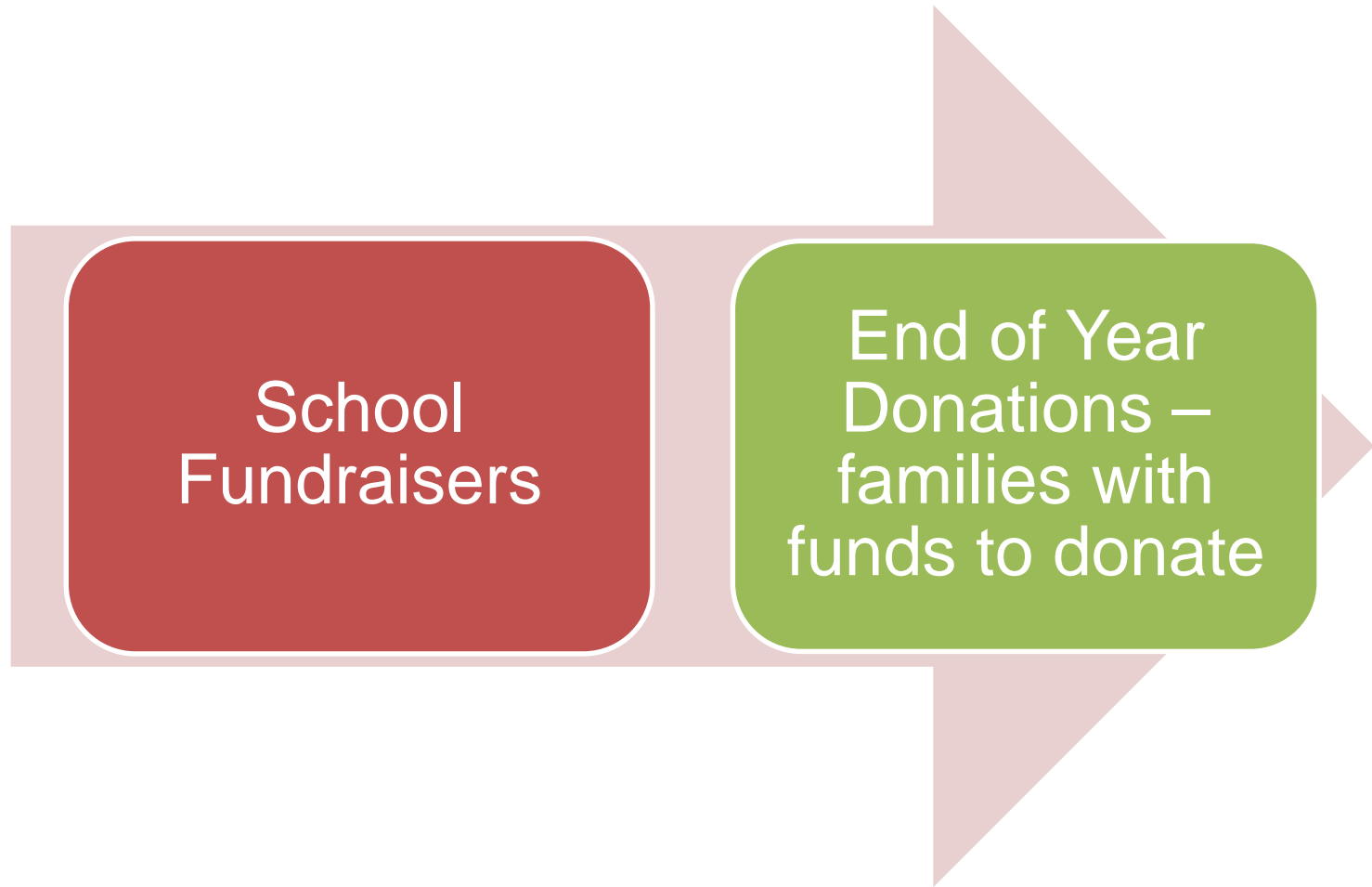
Revenue from adult meals or catering;
resources outside food service account

Charitable Funding Resources

Community Funding –
Kiwanis, United Way,
school volunteer
organizations, other
local charities

Random Acts of
Kindness Funding –
funds placed in a
general lunch account

Charitable Funding Resources



**How did you develop a
distribution plan to
ensure funds are shared
equitably between
schools and among
children?**



Develop a Distribution Plan

Work with school counselors or social workers to determine which children would benefit from short-term funding

Develop a repayment plan for families relying on funds

Look at whole picture – cost of living in the community and personal hardships

What funding strategies do you avoid?



Funding Strategies to Avoid



USDA FNS does not view alternative funding as long-term solution



Teachers, food service professionals, cashiers and other school staff members should never be expected to pay for children's meals

Clarification on Collection of Delinquent Meals Payment



Unpaid Meal Charges = Delinquent Debt
Delinquent if considered collectable
Debt remains on accounting documents until collected or written off

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Collection is Allowable Expense

Cost of collecting debt is allowable for School Foodservice Funds

Establish a Delinquent Debt Policy

Reasonable timeframe and methods

Unpaid meal charges may be carried over at end of school year

Establishing Delinquent Debt Policy

Focus on adults, not students

Consider if benefits of collection outweigh costs incurred

Policies regarding the collection of unpaid meal charges should be in the meal charge policy

Reclassifying Delinquent Debt as Bad Debt

Uncollectable and no further collection efforts

No longer considered an asset and must be written off as operating losses

Related collection costs and legal are now **unallowable**

Repayment must be restored with non-federal funds

Questions?



What
questions do
you have for
Jan and Jill?

The background of the slide features a close-up, slightly blurred image of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The lighting is warm and focused on the hands, with a soft blue glow emanating from the screen area. The overall composition suggests a focus on technology and communication.

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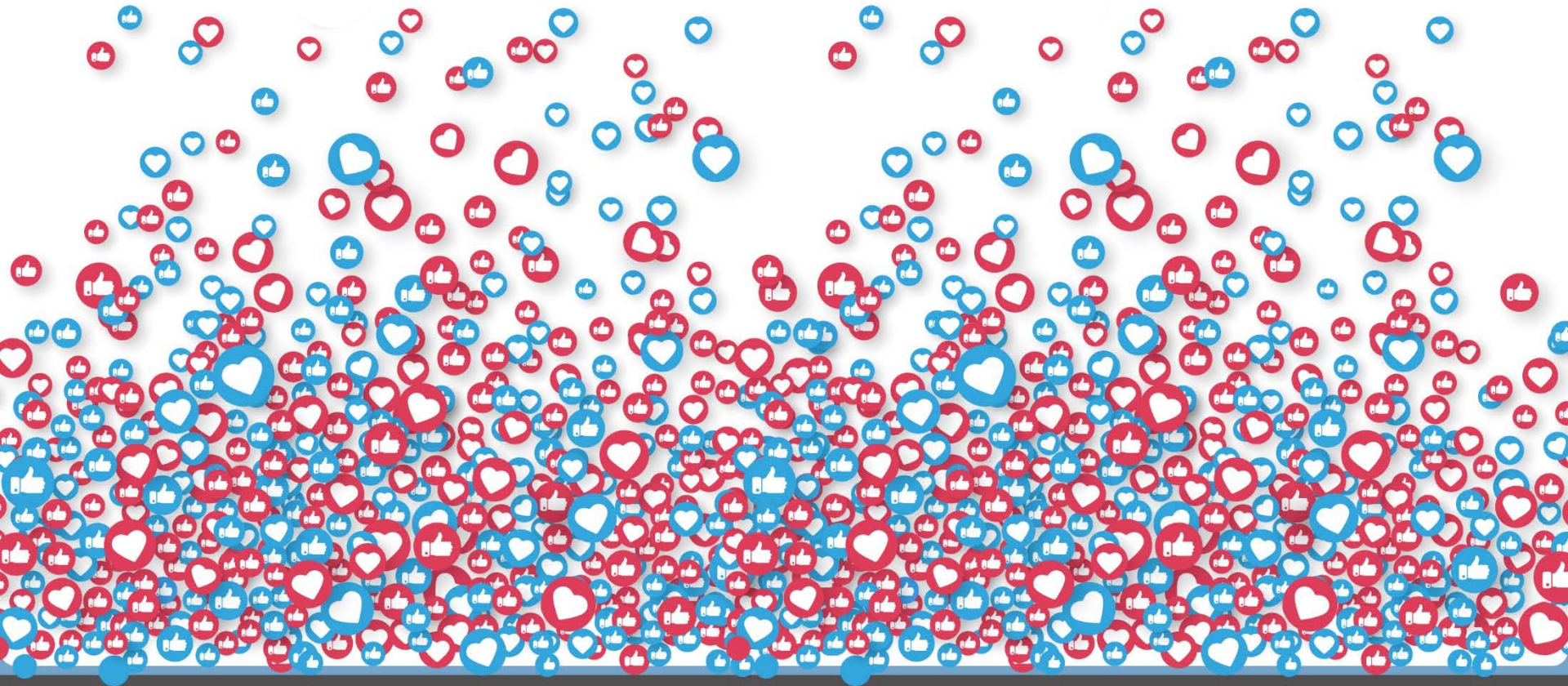
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