Offer versus Serve

Basic requirements National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program

Introduction:

Offer versus serve, or OVS, is a concept that applies to menu planning and the meal service. OVS allows students to decline some of the food offered in a reimbursable lunch or breakfast. This information reflects the requirements for school year 2013 – 2014 only.

NSLP and SBP Meal Pattern at a Glance

Plan meals that meet all meal pattern requirements and provide access to the required components and amounts of food for all students

Lunch Meal Pattern:

Component	Minimum required per day		
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Fruit	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup
Vegetable*	¾ cup	¾ cup	1 cup
Grain	1 oz. eq. (8-9 oz. eq. /wk.)	1 oz. eq. (8-10 oz. eq. /wk.)	2 oz. eq. (10-12 oz. eq. /wk.)
Meat/Meat Alternate	1 oz. eq. (8-10 oz. eq. /wk.)	1 oz. eq. (9-10 oz. eq. /wk.)	2 oz. eq. (10-12 oz. eq. /wk.)
Milk	1 cup	1 cup	1 cup

* Must meet additional vegetable subgroup requirements throughout the week

Breakfast Meal Pattern:

Component	Minimum required per day		
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Fruit/Vegetable	½ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Grains	1 oz. eq. (7-10 oz. eq. /wk.)	1 oz. eq. (8-10 oz. eq. /wk.)	1 oz. eq. (9-10 oz. eq. /wk.)
Milk	1 cup	1 cup	1 cup
Meat/Meat Alternate*	Optional with a serving of grains	Optional with a serving of grains	Optional with a serving of grains

* The Meat/Meat Alternate serving contributes to the grain range

General Requirements

- Plan meals that meet all meal pattern requirements and provide access to the required components and amounts of food for all students
- At lunch: offer all 5 components and the student can select 3 or more. One of the 3 must be ½ cup fruit or vegetable, or a combination of both
- At breakfast: offer 4 food items and the student can select 3 or more items.
- Schools must identify near or at the beginning of serving lines what foods constitute a reimbursable meal.
- Schools using OVS must also identify **what** a student must select in order to have a reimbursable meal.

OVS at Lunch

Schools must always offer the 5 required lunch components. A student must take at least 3 components in the required servings. One of the components must be at least ½ cup fruit or ½ cup vegetable, or a combination of fruit and vegetable to total ½ cup.

- OVS is required for senior high schools
- OVS is optional at middle and elementary schools
- OVS is not allowed for NSLP snack service

Special Situation: If a 9 – 12 grade student selects only 3 components, and two of these are a fruit and a vegetable, s/he must select the full required serving size (1 cup) for either the fruit or the vegetable in order to have both credited as components.

OVS at Breakfast

Schools must always offer the 3 required breakfast components: Fruit/Vegetable, Grains (or grains with optional Meat/Meat Alternate), and Milk. For OVS, schools must always offer 4 food items. A food item is a specific food offered within the 3 components. A student may select 3 of the 4 food items to have a reimbursable meal.

- OVS is optional at breakfast for all age/grade groups
- If choices of food items within the components are offered, the menu must indicate what choices or combination of choices the student may select.

OVS and "Extra Foods"

A school may offer extra foods that are not creditable for OVS, which may be used to compliment a reimbursable meal. This "extra" food may be selected by the student in addition to the meal; but may not be credited toward meeting the minimum number of food components/food items required under OVS. However, these extra foods must be included for the purposes of meeting the weekly dietary specifications, including calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

Where can I learn more?

Resource information

- USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Child Nutrition Programs
  http://www.fns.usda.gov/child-nutrition-programs
- Colorado Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition
  http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_nutrition.htm
- The National Food Service Management Institute
  http://www.nfsmi.org/

The Colorado Department of Education, Office of School Nutrition
1580 Logan Ste. 760, Denver, CO 80203 • 303-866-6661 • nutrition@cde.state.co.us

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