



## Offer vs. Serve Policy

### Identifying Reimbursable Meals under OVS (Signage, Menus, and Training)

Students, servers and cashiers must be able to identify what constitutes a reimbursable meal. The NSLP regulation at 7 CFR 210.10(a)(2) requires that schools identify, near or at the beginning of serving lines, what foods constitute unit priced reimbursable meals. Schools using OVS must also identify what a student must select in order to have a reimbursable meal under OVS. In addition to signage or other methods used in the food service areas, schools should provide information on OVS in materials, such as menus and newsletters, provided to parents or posted on websites.

Students and their parents need to be aware of what is included in the meals offered in school to reinforce nutrition education messages and to allow students to select a reimbursable meal under OVS. Signage as well as menus should provide clear information about allowable choices. This will help students easily determine what comprises a reimbursable meal for OVS and is especially important to avoid problems at the point of service. Schools are encouraged to conduct training for cashiers as well as serving line staff to help students select the required servings and food components/food items needed for reimbursable lunches and breakfasts.

Signage is not required for field trips, breakfast in the classroom and other venues where signage may be problematic. However, if choices are offered, other methods should be used to inform students what to select and whether OVS is implemented for these situations.

### Menu Planning and OVS

SFAs must plan lunches and breakfasts that meet all meal pattern requirements and provide access to the required types and amounts of food for all students. In addition, menus should reflect student preferences and, as much as possible, offer choices within the components. With OVS, menu planners have flexibility to address participation and selection trends to determine what and how much food to prepare. This flexibility results in cost savings and minimizes food waste.

If choices within components are offered, the menu planner must indicate what choices or combination of choices the student may select in order to have a reimbursable meal. For example, for grades 9-12 at least one cup of fruit must be offered in a reimbursable lunch. Additionally, the menu planner may *choose* to offer a variety of fruit. If ½ cup portions of three different fruits are offered, the menu planner would indicate that the student may select **up to** two ½ cup servings. This provides a variety of food choices to the student and shows



the student how to select a reimbursable lunch. OVS is utilized in this example since the student may choose to take no fruit, one ½ cup serving or two ½ cup servings from any of the three types of fruit offered.

Offering choices within components does not necessarily constitute OVS. Schools are encouraged to give students options of entrees and side items and are required to offer a variety of milk. If students are required to select at least one of every component, the SFA is not utilizing OVS.

**OVS allows students to decline some components entirely.**

### The meal pattern for lunches consists of 5 food components:

#### Minimum Per Day

##### **K-5 / 6-8**

- Fruits ½ cup
- Vegetables ¾ cup
- Grains 1oz.
- Meats/meat alternates (m/ma) 1oz.
- Fluid milk. 1 cup

##### **9-12**

- Fruits 1 cup
- Vegetables 1 cup
- Grains 2oz.
- Meats/meat alternates (m/ma) 2oz.
- Fluid milk. 1 cup

**\*Important to remember these are DAILY MINIMUM Requirements for the above grades.**

Under OVS, all students, at any grade level, must take:

- At least **3 of 5** food components.
- One of the choices selected **must be at least a ½ cup serving of the fruit or vegetable component or a ½ cup total serving of both fruit and vegetable.**

Three food components are required to support a minimally adequate nutritious meal for students as well as to support the amount of Federal reimbursement. Within each component, different choices may be offered and thus there are many combinations that the student may choose.

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## **OVS and a la Carte Sales**

Foods offered in reimbursable meals as well as other foods, may also be sold a la carte. Students and cashiers need to know which foods are considered food components/food items for the purposes of a reimbursable meal and OVS.

If a student does not select the required amount or number of food components/food items in the applicable portions, the meal is not reimbursable. Therefore, the school may charge the student a la carte prices for each item selected. As previously discussed, in order to avoid issues at check-out, schools are encouraged to conduct training for cashiers as well as serving line staff to help students select the required servings of food components/food items needed for reimbursable lunches and breakfasts

## **The meal pattern for Breakfast consists of 3 food components:**

The meal pattern for breakfasts consists of three food components:

- Juice/Fruit/Vegetable  $\frac{1}{2}$
- Grains 1oz or /
- Meats/meat alternates optional 1oz
- Milk 1 cup