

Commissioner's Memo
11/29/2021

Utilizing Offer versus Serve in Child Nutrition Programs

Memo Information

Memo Number **CNU-22-012**

Memo Date 11/29/2021

Memo Type Regulatory

Unit Child Nutrition

Regulatory Authority 7 CFR 210.30(c), 7 CFR 210.10(e)

Response Required NO

Attention Superintendents; Principals; Child Nutrition Directors/Managers

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Memo Text

The purpose of this memo is to provide guidance on Offer Versus Serve (OVS) requirements. Offer Versus Serve (OVS) is a type of meal service that can be used for the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, and by extension the Seamless Summer Option Program. It allows students to decline food items which can help to prevent plate waste.

In accordance with 7 CFR 210.10(e), senior high schools must participate in OVS at lunch. Schools below the senior high level may participate in OVS at the discretion of the School Food Authority (SFA). Senior high schools are defined in Arkansas as grades 9-12. If additional grades make up the high school, such as grades 7 -12, all students enrolled at the school must participate in OVS.

For SY 2021-2022, districts that have elected to utilize waiver [COVID-19 CN Response #92](#) with schedule D, OVS is not required for high school. (This waiver will expire June 30, 2022.)

In accordance with 7 CFR 210.30(c-d), Child Nutrition staff must be trained annually on OVS and how to identify a reimbursable meal at the point of service. Schools are also expected to train cashiers and serving line staff annually. SFAs are expected to retain documentation of the staff training given along with hours of training.

OVS signage must be displayed at the serving area for servers, cashiers, and students to be able to recognize what constitutes a reimbursable meal through OVS.

[Link to USDA OVS signage.](#)

Implementing OVS at Lunch:

A food component is one of five required food groups in reimbursable lunches. These are meat/meat alternates, grains, fruits, vegetables, and fluid milk.

When administering OVS:

- all 5 food components must be offered in their minimum required quantities,
- students must take at least 3 of the 5 components, and
- 1 of the 3 components must be at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit or vegetable.

When informing students that they must select at least 3 components including at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit or vegetable, SFAs must ensure marketing materials promote nutritional benefits of a full school lunch and that students may select all 5 components offered.

Implementing OVS at Breakfast:

A food item is a specific food offered within the five food components. There are 3 required components that must be offered at breakfast including fruits, grains, and fluid milk.

When administering OVS:

- at least 4 food items must be offered in their minimum required quantities,
- students must take at least 3 of the 4 items, and
- 1 of the 3 items must be at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit and/or vegetable.

When informing students that they must select at least 3 items including at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit or vegetable, SFAs must ensure marketing materials promote nutritional benefits of a full school breakfast and that students may select all items offered.