



Background

Offer versus serve (OVS) is a concept that applies to menu planning and meal service. OVS allows students to decline some of the food offered in a reimbursable lunch or breakfast meal. The goals of OVS are to reduce food waste and allow students to choose the foods they want to eat.

Breakfast Meal Pattern

Component	Minimum required per day		
	Grades K-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
Fruit/Vegetable	1 cup	1 cup	1 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

OVS at Breakfast

- OVS is optional at breakfast for all age/grade groups
- OVS is not allowed for preschool meals following the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern
- 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 must select at least 3 food items 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.
- If choices of food items within the components are offered, the menu must indicate what choices or combination of choices the student may select.

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

General Requirements

- Schools must plan meals that meet all meal pattern requirements and provide all students access to the required components and amounts of food
- 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. One of the 3 must be ½ cup fruit or vegetable, or a combination of both
- 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.
- School meals must be priced as a unit. OVS does not affect the meal's unit price. Students who take 3, 4, or 5 food components for lunch or 3 or more food items for breakfast pay the same price.



OVS at Lunch

- OVS is required for senior high schools
- OVS is not allowed for preschool meals following the CACFP meal pattern
- OVS is optional for middle and elementary schools
- Schools must always offer the 5 required lunch components: Fruit, Vegetables, Grains, Meat/Meat Alternate and milk.
- A student must select 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.
- **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 Snack

- OVS is not allowed for the Afterschool Care Snack Program

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.

Resources

- Colorado Department of Education, School Nutrition Unit
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/nutrition>
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Child Nutrition Programs
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/child-nutrition-programs>
- The Institute of Child Nutrition
<https://theicn.org/>

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.