

Offer Versus Serve Meal Service Option

Regulation permits the use of Offer Versus Serve (OVS) meal service option for At-Risk Afterschool programs. OVS is allowable for breakfast, lunch, and supper. OVS is not allowed at snack.

OVS is an approach to menu planning and meal service where participants are offered all of the components of the meal pattern, but are not required to take all of them. OVS can help teach children to make choices and is a way to decrease food waste because participants choose only those foods they wish to eat. A School Food Authority (SFA) may choose to follow the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) meal pattern, including the OVS requirements, or the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern.

Assistance with meal selection may be necessary in order to provide well-balanced meals. Participants are not required to decline foods that are offered but may do so if they choose. OVS is not considered appropriate for preschool children participating in At-Risk Afterschool programs as it may interfere with program nutrition goals and the center's efforts to introduce new foods to children.

The centers must notify the Department of Health and Senior Services-Community Food and Nutrition Assistance (DHSS-CFNA) for approval to use OVS. The center's option to participate in OVS must be noted on their application. This includes an SFA following the OVS requirements for the NSLP and/or SBP. The DHSS-CFNA must also be notified if the center changes the OVS option.

OVS at Breakfast

The CACFP breakfast meal pattern requires three food components to be offered: milk, fruits and vegetables, and grains. As a reminder, fruit and vegetables are one combined component in the breakfast meal patterns.

When using OVS at breakfast, at least the following four food items, in the required minimum serving sizes, must be offered:

- A serving of milk.
- A food item from the fruit and vegetable component.
- A food item from the grains component.
- A food item from the meat/meat alternate component or one additional item from the fruit and vegetable component or grains component.

All the food items offered must be different from each other. For example, while a flake cereal, such as bran flakes with raisins, and a puff cereal, such as puffed rice cereal, are two types of cereals that are not identical, they are the same food item.



OVS at Lunch or Supper

The CACFP lunch and supper meal patterns requires all five food components to be offered: milk, meat/meat alternates, vegetable, fruits, and grains.

When using OVS at lunch or supper, at least one food item from each of the five food components, in the required minimum serving sizes, required at lunch and supper must be offered:

- A serving of milk.
- A food item from the meat/meat alternate component.
- A food item from the vegetable component.
- A food item from the fruit component.
- A food item from the grains component.

Unlike OVS at breakfast, at lunch or supper meals, a child must take at least three food components, rather than three items, to ensure the child takes an adequately nutritious meal. A child must select at least the minimum required serving size of the components for them to be counted. It is the child's choice to select or decline a food component. At-Risk Afterschool programs may not specify what food components a child must select.

Adequate food and milk purchases will be verified at the CACFP monitoring reviews in compliance with the OVS meal option. The center must demonstrate that they offer all program meal components in the regulatory amounts. If the center is ordering milk based on previous consumption patterns, they should have a plan on how to ensure that enough milk will be provided should the demand increase for any given day of operation.

The amount of milk purchased should correlate with the food preference of participants that routinely choose to drink milk in the eight ounce (1/2 pint) minimum serving size offered. It is the responsibility of program personnel to offer milk as a beverage choice to participants according to the At-Risk Afterschool Food Chart. The At-Risk Afterschool program should document daily portions served to justify that adequate milk is purchased for the number of participants who choose to drink milk. There are 16 eight ounce servings per one gallon of milk.

