Offer vs. Serve

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. The goals of OVS are to reduce food waste and to permit students to choose the foods they want to eat.

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. Because of the School Year (SY) 2014-2015 changes to the SBP meal pattern and resulting changes to OVS, schools offering breakfasts must ensure that students and their parents are aware of the new requirements. In addition, SFAs and schools should highlight the SBP changes in materials, such as menus and newsletters, provided to parents or posted on websites.

Signage is not required for field trips, breakfast in the classroom and other venues where signage may be problematic. However, other methods should be used to inform students what choices they have.

Because of the OVS requirement for the NLSP and the SBP that each student select at least ½ cup of a fruit or vegetable, the adult supervisor must ensure that each student selects at least a ½ cup of fruit or vegetable or a combination of both

A school may offer “extra” foods, such as ice cream or pudding, which are not creditable.

However, these “extra” foods must be included in a nutrient analysis to assess compliance with the weekly dietary specifications (calories, saturated fat, and sodium).

Key Terms

A food component is one of five food groups that comprise reimbursable lunches.

A food item is a specific food offered within the five food components.

Under OVS, a student must take at least three components in the required quantities. One selection must be at least ½ cup (total) from either the fruit or vegetable component.

The meal pattern for lunches consists of five food components:

(1) Fruits

(2) Vegetables

(3) Grains

(4) Meats/meat alternates (m/ma) and

(5) Fluid milk.

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

* At least 3 of 5 food components **AND**
* 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. If ½ cup of fruit is selected, the student must select the full required daily serving of the vegetable component for it to be counted as meeting that component.

Implementing OVS at Breakfast

A *food component* is one of three food groups that comprise reimbursable breakfasts. These are: fruits (or vegetables as substitute); grains (with optional meat/meat alternate); and fluid milk. Schools must always offer all three food components in at least the minimum daily required quantities.

A *food item* is a specific food offered within the three food components. For the purposes of OVS, a school must offer at least four food items from the three required food components (fruits, grains, milk). Under OVS, the student must select three food items, including at least ½ cup of fruits, to have a reimbursable breakfast.

The Basics

The meal pattern for breakfast consists of three food components:

(1) Fruits (or vegetables substitution)

(2) Grains (or optional credited meats/meat alternates)

(3) Milk

For OVS:

* At least four food items must be offered;
* All students, at any grade level, must select at least three food items;
* For grains (or meat/meat alternate offered for this component) and milk, the student must select the daily minimum required amount; and
* For the fruit component, the student must select at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetables;

A menu planner may offer a 2 oz eq. muffin as one or two food items.

* Menu with five food items:
* Whole grain-rich muffin (2 oz eq grain) [2 grain items]
* Whole grain-rich cereal (1 oz eq grain) [1 grain item]
* Orange slices (1 cup fruit) [2 fruit item]
* Variety of milk (1 cup) [1 milk item]

Using the menu in Example 8 above, the following selections are reimbursable:

* Whole grain-rich muffin, orange slices
* Whole grain-rich muffin, orange slices, milk
* Whole grain-rich cereal, orange slices , milk
* Orange slices, milk