

## Guidance Memorandum: #12C, 2H

### H. Meal Service

#### Allowed Meal Service Methods

##### Pre-plated style from a line, table, or cart

At the beginning of each meal/snack, portions of all required meal components in amounts no less than each of their minimum serving sizes required must be placed on each participant's serving dish(es) and within his/her drinking cup at the serving table or highchair.

##### Family Style Dining

The family style dining method allows participants to serve themselves from common platters of food with the assistance of supervising adults, as needed. In line with the nutritional goals of the CACFP, family style meal service encourages a pleasant eating environment, promotes mealtime as a learning experience by allowing children to serve themselves from common platters of food (with assistance from supervising adults) and provides educational activities that are centered around food. Even when a complete family style meal service is not possible or practical, it may be useful to offer one component or multiple components in a family style manner. Supervising adults should provide assistance to participants as needed when serving foods from communal platters. This practice can help young children develop motor skills and the dexterity and hand strength needed to serve foods.

##### Programs choosing to exercise this option must be in compliance with the following practices:

- The food items being served to meet the required meal components are provided in age or ability-appropriate common serving dishes placed on each serving table, where the participants are seated. At the beginning of each meal/snack, the amounts of food within the common serving dishes placed on each serving table must have enough portions to provide no less than the minimum required serving sizes for the number of participants seated at each of these serving tables, including the supervising adults if they eat with the participants. All meal components must remain on each table throughout the duration of the meal service.
- Each participant must be allowed to serve the food components themselves, with the exception of fluids (such as milk). Supervising adults who choose to serve the fluids directly to the participants must pour no less than the required minimum serving size into each participant's beverage cup.
- During the course of the meal, it is the responsibility of the supervising adults to actively encourage each participant to serve themselves the full required portion of each food component of the meal pattern. If a participant does not take a required meal component, or takes less than the full required portion of each meal component, the participant should be encouraged to take some of the item(s) again.

→ For tips on how to successfully serve meals family style in CACFP, refer to:

- [Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children Supplement E: Support for Family Style Meals](#)
- [DPI's Family Style Dining Handout](#)

##### Serving by Family Style Dining and Pre-plated Style within the Same Meal

Centers may serve some foods by pre-plated style and some by family style dining within the same meal, depending on the participant's abilities, so long as all meal components are served

and the portions served on the participant's plates or within serving dishes placed on each table provide the required minimum serving sizes.

### **Cafeteria-Style**

Cafeteria Style is similar to the pre-plated style in that portions of **all required meal components in amounts no less than each of their minimum serving sizes required** must be taken by each of the participants while moving through the serving line or selected from a common serving cart or table.

### **Onsite and Supervised**

Meals and snacks must be offered to and consumed by the participants while under the agency's supervision, either on-site or during outings. Meals and snacks given to the participants for eating when not under the Program's care or are sent home with them cannot be claimed for reimbursement.

### **Meal Service Times**

Meals should be served at regularly scheduled times each day as indicated in your online CACFP Contract. Meal times for infants may vary because they eat "on demand" and should be fed according to their own feeding schedule.

### **Serving all Meal Components Together**

All required meal components must be served together at the same time **and** the requirements specified for the meal service method used must be followed in order for the meal or snack to be reimbursable.

→ **At no time can a participant be forced to eat nor can any meal components be withheld.**