

Meals on Field Trips

School food service operations offer meals to students on field trips to maintain a steady revenue stream. Fewer student meals affects the funding schools receive in student payments, federal reimbursement, state match payment, and commodity allocations. This loss of revenue can add up over the course of the school year. In addition, it is difficult for school food service operations to appropriately adjust labor hours when there are occasional dips in participation, which may negatively affect productivity. Field trip meals are also a great convenience to busy parents. Here are some options for providing field trip meals:

Option #1: Bagged Meals

Provide a bag breakfast and/or lunch to accompany students on field trips. The meals may be claimed for reimbursement if planned and served in accordance with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal pattern requirements (i.e. all minimums are met per age/grade group).

Advantages

- No need to make arrangements for meals when planning field trips
- Cost savings when school meal is a lower-cost alternative to a meal purchased before, during or after the field trip
- Students have an opportunity to receive a well-balanced meal
- School nutrition service does not experience a loss in revenue or productivity
- Teachers and other school staff have fewer concerns (such as students forgetting to bring meals or money, or wholesomeness of the food items brought from home)

To implement the bag meal option, the following must be done:

1. Develop an ordering procedure to allow food service staff time to purchase, prepare and pack bag meals
2. Keep food items, including milk, at the appropriate temperatures until meal service
3. Use an acceptable point of service counting procedure to record the number of reimbursable meals served by category (free, reduced, and paid) and/or account for any a la carte sales. Schools may use a class roster to check off each student's name as he/she is handed a reimbursable meal. Another option for schools with electronic meal counting systems is to mark the computer-generated bar codes of the students when they receive the meals.

Option #2: Breakfast or Lunch at a School that Participates in USDA School Meals Programs

Make arrangements to obtain meals at a field trip site that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). Possible sites include other schools that host a local or regional event, school forests, and environmental learning centers.

Advantages

- Reimbursable meals meeting USDA meal pattern requirements are available
- If a school, meals may be claimed by the host school for visiting students (paid student category only unless the eligibility category is known and kept confidential when payment is received and meals are counted and claimed) or by the visiting school
- The host school preparing the meals may choose to:
 - Bill the visiting school for the number of student and adult lunches and/or breakfasts served. Meal prices may be those set by the host school for meals purchased by students and staff or negotiated meal prices. The visiting school follows procedures for collecting appropriate payment for adult and student meals by type and for submitting accurate claims for reimbursement meals by type and by student eligibility category (free, reduced, and paid). The visiting school processes the invoice and submits payment to the host school that provided the meals.
 - Obtain a point of service count of the number of visiting student meals by eligibility category (free, reduced, and paid) and the number of visiting adult meals. Appropriate meal payments are also collected by the host school. Provisions are made to protect the identity of students receiving free or reduced-price meals and to collect payments that do not exceed the maximum charge set by

USDA for breakfast and for lunch if the students qualify for reduced-price meals. Adult and student meals are reported by the host school following instructions for completion of the monthly reimbursement claim. Note: Only one school may claim the meals for reimbursement.

Option #3: Select Menus that are Reimbursable for SBP or NSLP

Purchase meals at the field trip site that qualify for reimbursement under the NSLP and SBP. Museums and other field trip locations may choose to work with the state agency to provide meals that meet meal pattern requirements. Contact the site to ask if such arrangements have been made.

Advantages

- Meals arrangements are made with minimal effort on the part of the field trip planners
- Food safety considerations are minimized as meals are prepared on-site
- All students receive the same meal
- Menus are analyzed to determine compliance with meal pattern requirements (minimums from food components) and weekly dietary specifications (calories, saturated fat, and sodium) during Administrative Reviews (ARs)

Field Trip Meals: Claimed for Reimbursement

1. Procedures must be established for collecting meal payments and obtaining a count by eligibility category in a manner that does not overtly identify students approved for free and reduced price meal benefits.
2. Meals must be provided at no cost to students approved for free meal benefits and the meal charges for students approved for the reduced price meal category is no more than the maximum charge set by USDA (currently 30 cents for breakfast and 40 cents for lunch).
3. Point of service counts must be obtained for meals served to students by eligibility category (free, reduced, and paid).
4. For schools using Offer versus Serve (OVS): note that OVS is not required for pre-packaged field trip meals, even for high school students. However, OVS is encouraged in order to reduce waste and allow students to choose what they would like to eat. When possible, allow students to select from the milk choices and the other available lunch components and/or breakfast items by setting up the serving line prior to the time students will leave for the field trip. With supervision to ensure reimbursable meals are selected, allow students to place menu items in their bag meals consistent with OVS. Students must select 3 of 5 components at lunch, including $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit and/or vegetable. Students must select 3 of 4 items at breakfast, including $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit and/or vegetable. Label bags with the name of the student. Students may enter their pin or student ID number but actual participation must be verified when the meal is served to provide accurate counts by eligibility category for the monthly claim.

NSLP – Field Trip Option

Meeting [Meal Pattern Requirements](#)

Children on a field trip must be offered meals that meet the meal pattern. This means the minimums per food component must be included in a bagged lunch. Refer to the chart below for the daily and weekly quantities for the specific age/grade groups.

For example, a lunch planned for students in grades K-8 must contain: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup vegetable, 1.0 ounce equivalent (oz eq) grain, 1.0 oz eq of meat/meat alternate (M/MA), and 1 cup of milk. Two milk types must be available for selection by the students. The allowable milk types are fat-free (skim) and low-free (skim) flavored or unflavored.

For occasional field trips, the menu planner does not have to adjust the weekly menu planned for the meals served at the school and does not have to pack the same vegetable offering that is served at the school that day. The menu planner has the option to offer a different vegetable, or a different vegetable from the same subgroup. However, the meals from field trips must be included when determining if the lunches planned meet the weekly grain and meat/meat alternate ranges and weekly dietary specifications (calories, saturated fat, and sodium).

Menu Ideas

Meat/Meat Alternate

Cheese stick
Yogurt
Hummus
Bean salad
Sunflower seeds packet
Deli meat and cheese
Peanut butter

Grains (whole grain-rich)

Bun or bread
Corn or English muffin
Pita bread
Corn or tortilla chips
Tortilla or wrap
Cereal
Low-sodium snack crackers
Low-sodium pretzels
Cereal bar (*grain based dessert*)
Oatmeal cookie (*grain based dessert*)
Sweet muffin (*grain based dessert*)

Milk

Fat-Free White
Low-Fat White
Fat-Free Chocolate

Fruits

Apple
Banana
Orange
Raisins
Craisins
100% fruit juice
Applesauce cup
Fruit cup
Frozen fruit cup

Vegetables

Broccoli (*dark green*)
Romaine or spinach salad (*dark green*)
Carrot sticks (*red/orange*)
Cherry tomatoes (*red/orange*)
Red pepper (*red/orange*)
Marinara sauce (*red/orange*)
Salsa (*red/orange*)
Cauliflower (*other*)
Celery sticks (*other*)
Green pepper (*other*)
Coleslaw (*other*)
Jicama (*starchy*)
Frozen, thawed corn and/or peas (*starchy*)
Chickpea salad (*beans/peas*)
Black bean salad (*beans/peas*)
Lentil salad (*beans/peas*)
Hummus (*beans/peas*)

Additional Items to include with field trip meals:

- Spoon for yogurt, fruit cups, salads, and other non-finger foods
- Napkin
- Condiments

Helpful Hints on Preparing, Packaging and Serving Field Trip Meals

Preparing and Packaging

1. Set up a production line for packing field trip meals.
2. Minimize the time potentially hazardous foods are left at room temperature.
3. Chill ingredients used in the preparation of sandwich fillings or salads that will be served cold.
4. Protect food from contamination by purchasing pre-packaged or placing items in sealable, individual serving containers.
5. Place set number of bag meals in transport containers and mark the containers with the number of meals.

Keeping Bag Meals Safe

1. Maintain the temperature of potentially hazardous food (time/temperature control for food safety food) at appropriate temperatures during all holding periods (41° F. or below if cold and 140° F. or above if hot).
2. Chill potentially hazardous food (time/temperature control for food safety food) that will be served cold before placing transport containers.
3. Transport hot and cold potentially hazardous food (time/temperature control for food safety food) in insulated transport containers, coolers that can be plugged into a portal in the car or bus, or arrange to purchase potentially hazardous food items.
4. Consider purchasing milk in shelf-stable packaging that does not require refrigeration if milk temperature cannot be maintained in portable coolers.
5. Use cold packs to maintain the temperature of potentially hazardous food (time/temperature control for food safety food)
6. Make arrangements to purchase milk at the field trip location if it cannot be safely transported or stored.
7. Discard potentially hazardous food (time/temperature control for food safety food) returned in coolers from the field trip.

Potentially hazardous food (time/temperature control for food safety food) means a food that requires time/temperature control for safety to limit pathogenic microorganism growth or toxin formation. Specifically mentioned food items in the WI Food Code include: an animal food that is raw or heat-treated; a plant food that is heat-treated or consists of raw seeds or sprouts, cut melons, cut leafy greens, cut tomatoes or mixtures of cut tomatoes that are not modified in a way so they are unable to support pathogenic microorganisms growth or toxic formation. Handle with care.