

Offer versus Serve (OVS) In a Nutshell



OVS applies to menu planning and meal service and allows students to decline some of the food offered in a reimbursable meal.

Goals

- Reduce food waste
- Permit students to choose the foods that they want to eat

Requirements

- Required for 9-12 students at lunch
- Optional (but encouraged) for K-8 at lunch and K-12 at breakfast.
- If implemented at a school, OVS applies to the following situations: special needs students, those on field trips, and those in detention.
- At the point of service, cashiers must be trained and informed on what constitutes a reimbursable meal. This includes understanding foods and/or beverages that are a la carte and/or extras, which do not count under OVS.

Requirements	Breakfast	Lunch
What schools must <u>offer</u>	At least four food items from three food components (<i>grain, fruit, fluid milk</i>)	All five food components (<i>grain, meat/meat alternate, fruit, vegetable, fluid milk</i>)
Daily minimums to <u>offer</u>	K-12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 oz eq grain • 1 cup fruit (or vegetable) • 1 cup milk Breakfast food items are defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 oz eq grain (or meat/meat alternate counting as a grain) • ½ cup fruit • 1 cup fluid milk 	K-8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 oz eq grain • 1 oz eq meat/meat alternate • ½ cup fruit • ¾ cup vegetable • 1 cup fluid milk 9-12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 oz eq grain • 2 oz eq meat/meat alternate • 1 cup fruit • 1 cup vegetable • 1 cup fluid milk
What students must <u>select</u>	At least three food items, one of which is ½ cup fruit, vegetable, or a combination.	At least three different food components, one of which is ½ cup fruit, vegetable, or a combination.

Signage

- OVS signage must clearly indicate what constitutes a reimbursable meal. It must also state that ½ cup of fruit, vegetable or a combination is required as part of a reimbursable meal. Signage is not required for field trips, breakfast in the classroom, or other venues where signage may be problematic.

Pre-Packaged (bagged or “Grab and Go”) Meals

- Allowable at all age/grade levels
- If pre-packaged meals are offered to high school students, students must still have the option to turn down at least one component, such as milk or fruit.
- If meals are offered as part of breakfast in the classroom, field trips, or for students leaving the campus for work-study, OVS is not required (but encouraged), even at the senior high school level.

No OVS

If a school decides to have no OVS (except for high school students), then students must select one of everything planned for a meal to be reimbursable.

- **Infants and Preschool in NSLP and SBP**

- Pre-kindergarten students that are **not** comingled with others must follow the Infant and Pre-K meal pattern (comingled students come through the meal service line in the same place and at the same times as other students). With this meal pattern, OVS is unallowable. Schools must either utilize:

- No OVS, or
- Family Style Meal Service

More information can be found on the [Infants and Preschool in NSLP and SBP webpage](#)¹

Question and Answer (Q & A)

Q: Must food service prepare enough servings for every student when OVS is in place?

A: No! Food service must plan meals to meet meal pattern requirements and provide amounts of food for all students. Take into account participant selection trends to determine what and how much food to offer students. Careful menu planning will help cut down on food waste.

Q: Are meals priced differently dependent on what a student selects?

A: No! School meals must be priced (for paid and reduced categories) as a unit. One price is established for a complete reimbursable meal in the paid category and one in the reduced price meal category. OVS does not affect the meal's unit price, meaning a student who selects five food components for lunch cannot be charged more than a student who selects three food components.

Q: Is it acceptable to require that all students select a milk as part of their reimbursable meal?

A: No! Other than selecting the required $\frac{1}{2}$ cup minimum of fruit, vegetable, or a combination, a student cannot be forced to select certain food components. Schools may not specify other food components a student must select. However, a variety of milks must always be offered at meal service.

Q: Can pre-bagged meals be offered with BIC when OVS is in place?

A: Yes! If a school participates in OVS at breakfast and offers meals where some or all of the components are bundled together, the operator should attempt to the maximum extent possible to offer choices aside from pre-bagged items. However, there is no requirement that all possible combinations of choices be made available to students.

Q: Can a student select two $\frac{1}{2}$ cups fruit and a milk for a reimbursable breakfast?

A: Yes! The requirement is that students select three food items (not necessarily separate components). In this example, three food items as selected and at least one of the items meets the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit, vegetable, or combination requirement. This is a reimbursable meal.

Resources

- [Offer versus Serve Guidance Manual](#)²
- [Offer versus Serve Webcasts](#)³
- [Menu Planning webpage](#)⁴

¹ <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/program-requirements/infants-and-preschool>

² <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP41-2015av2.pdf>

³ <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/training/webcasts#offer%20versus%20serve>

⁴ <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/program-requirements/menu-planning>

