

Guide to Meal Service Requirements for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program



Program Year 2026-27 (Effective June 8, 2026)



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Connecticut State Department of Education
Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs
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About This Guide

The Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) *Guide to Meal Service Requirements for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program* provides detailed guidance and resources to assist adult day care center sponsors of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) with meeting the meal service requirements and guidance for enrolled participants.

This guide is part of the CSDE's CACFP menu planning guidance series for adult day care centers (refer to "[CSDE's Menu Planning Guidance Series](#)" in this section).

This guide reflects the USDA regulations and policies in effect as of the publication date. Please note that this information may change. The CSDE will update this guide whenever the USDA issues new CACFP guidance. For the most current version, please check the CSDE's "[CSDE Menu Planning Guidance Series](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/guide_cacfp_meal_service_adults.pdf.

Questions regarding this guide may be directed to Susan Fiore, MS, RD, Nutrition Education Coordinator, at 860-807-2075 or susan.fiore@ct.gov.

CSDE's Menu Planning Guidance Series

This guide is part of the CSDE's menu planning guidance series for the CACFP. These guides are designed to assist CACFP sponsors with meeting the CACFP meal patterns, including the requirements for crediting foods and beverages, menu documentation, and meal service. The applicable guides for adult day care centers are listed below.

- Guide to Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Adult Meal Patterns
- Guide to Meeting the Crediting Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (applies to the CACFP meal patterns for children and the CACFP adult meal patterns)
- Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (applies to the CACFP meal patterns for children and the CACFP adult meal patterns)
- Guide to Meal Service Requirements for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

The menu planning guidance series for the CACFP is available in the "[CSDE Menu Planning Guidance Series](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

Contact Information for CSDE CACFP Staff

For questions regarding the CACFP, please contact the CACFP staff in the CSDE's Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs.

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For information on the CACFP, visit the CSDE's [Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Program Guidance for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpage.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

APP	alternate protein product
AR	Administrative Review
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
C.G.S.	Connecticut General Statutes
CN	Child Nutrition
CSDE	Connecticut State Department of Education
FBG	Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA)
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
FR	Federal Register
ICN	Institute of Child Nutrition
MMA	meats/meat alternates
OVS	offer versus serve
oz eq	ounce equivalents
PFS	product formulation statement
RTE	ready to eat
SOP	standard operating procedure
TCS	Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WGR	whole grain-rich

For additional guidance, refer to the CSDE's resource, [*Commonly Used Acronyms and Abbreviations in the Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)*](#).



1 — Introduction

This guide assists CACFP adult day care centers with meeting the meal service requirements for participants.

CACFP sponsors are eligible for USDA reimbursement when meals and snacks contain the minimum serving of each required meal component and meet all crediting requirements. In addition to meeting the CACFP adult meal patterns and crediting requirements, adult day care centers must also comply with all applicable USDA regulations and policies for meal service to participants.

Overview of CACFP Adult Meal Patterns

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) CACFP adult meal patterns are designed to meet participants' calorie needs, provide key nutrients, and align with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. The CACFP adult meal patterns require minimum servings of specific meal components for breakfast, lunch/supper, and snack. Meals and snacks served to participants are eligible for USDA reimbursement when they contain the minimum portion of each required meal component.

Meal components and crediting requirements

A meal component is one of the five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals and snacks. These meal components include milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates (MMA).

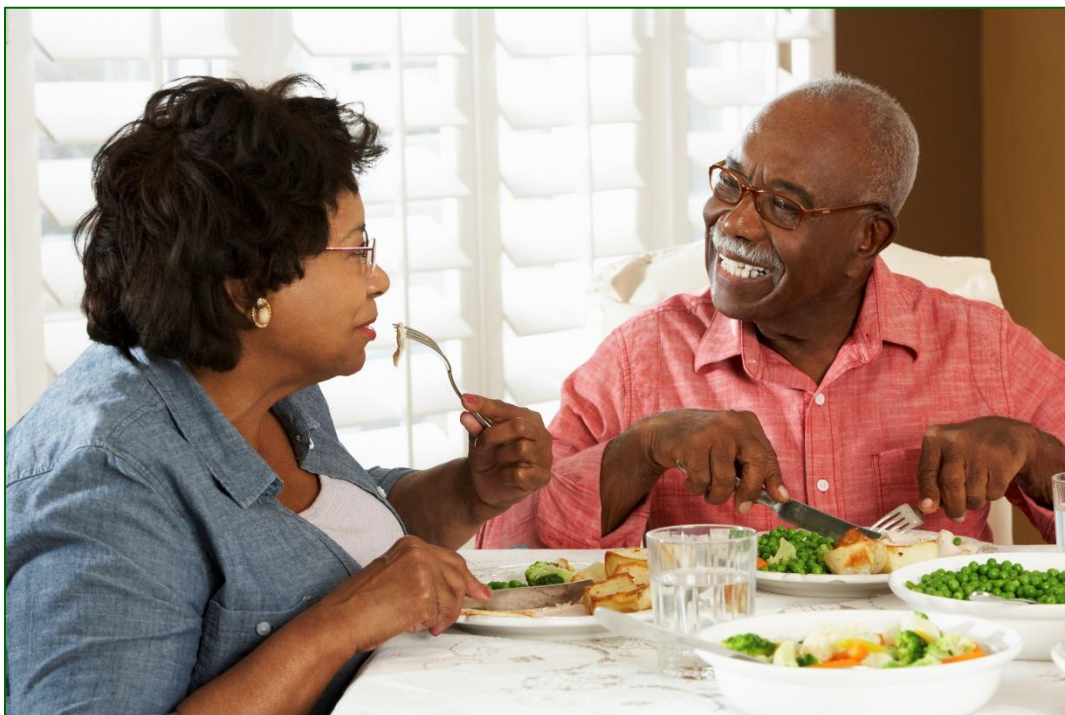
Each meal component has specific crediting requirements. All foods and beverages must meet these requirements to credit as a meal component of reimbursable meals and snacks. This includes commercial products, foods made from scratch by the CACFP facility, and foods prepared by vendors.

For detailed guidance on the meal pattern requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\) Adult Meal Patterns](#) and visit the "[CACFP Adult Meal Patterns](#)" section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

For information on the crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Crediting Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage.

Overview of Meal Service Requirements

Federal and state regulations and policies address meal service for participants in the CACFP. This includes requirements and guidance for meal schedules, types of meal service, point-of service meal and snack counts, intent to participate in the meal service, meals consumed off site (e.g., field trip meals), offer versus serve (OVS), prohibition of gender separation, and foods provided by participants or their guardian/caregiver for medical or special dietary needs.



Point-of-service Meal/Snack Counts

Adult day care centers must record all counts for reimbursable meals and snacks at the point of service. This is the moment in the meal service where staff can accurately determine that the participant has been served all required meal components for a reimbursable meal or snack.

- For cafeteria-style meal service, staff must record point-of-service meal counts after all required meal components of the reimbursable meal have been offered to the participant. This is typically at the end of the serving line (refer to [“Point-of-service meal counts for cafeteria-style meal service”](#) in section 3).
- For pre-plated meal service (included bagged meals/snacks), staff must record point-of-service meal/snack counts when the participant receives the meal/snack (refer to [“Point-of-service counts for pre-plated meal service”](#) in section 3).
- For family-style meal service and combination-style meal service, staff must record point-of-service meal/snack counts while participants are eating, but no later than the conclusion of the meal or snack service (refer to [“Monitoring point-of-service meal/snack counts”](#) and [“Point-of-service counts for combination-style meal service”](#) in section 3).

Meal/snack counts cannot be taken before or after the meal or snack service. The USDA does not allow any other methods to determine meal/snack counts, such as participants' attendance, orders for meals/snacks, and the number of meals/snacks sent to or returned from satellite locations. Meal/snack counts must be recorded by trained staff who are familiar with the CACFP requirements and can recognize reimbursable meals and snacks.



Guidelines for Scheduling Meals and Snacks

The USDA regulations for the CACFP do not address specific requirements for the timing or length of meal service. However, the CSDE encourages adult day care centers to schedule meal services to ensure good nutrition practices, minimize food waste, and provide sufficient time for participants to eat.

Adult day care centers should consider the appropriate timing and scheduling for meals and snacks to effectively meet participants' nutritional needs and promote a healthy eating environment. Staff should collaborate with their administrators to establish optimal meal and snack schedules. The CSDE recommends following the guidelines below when planning meals and snacks for participants.

Space eating intervals appropriately

Schedule meal and snack periods at appropriate times that are not too close together or too far apart. When the time span is too short, participants may not be hungry enough to eat. When the time span is too long, participants may experience hunger symptoms (such as fatigue, irritability, inability to concentrate, weakness, and stomach pains) that can disrupt their daily activities.

Meal schedules should ensure that participants maintain consistent energy levels while minimizing excessive hunger or overeating.

Allow sufficient time to eat

Allowing sufficient time for all participants to eat and socialize during mealtimes is an important part of a healthy eating environment. Scheduled mealtimes should allow for at least 20 minutes to eat breakfast or snack and at least 30 minutes to eat lunch or supper, after all participants are seated at the table. This allows participants to consume their meals without feeling rushed and fosters social interactions.

Intent to Participate in the Meal Service

For adult day care centers to claim reimbursement for CACFP meals and snacks, enrolled adults attending the day care center must participate in the meal or snack service or have the intent to participate in the meal or snack service. An enrolled adult who makes no attempt (i.e., has no intent) to join other participants at the meal or snack cannot be included in the reimbursable meal or snack count, even if they were asked by the supervising adult to participate.

The USDA regulations allow for reimbursement of meals and snacks that are served to and eaten by participants. They do not allow for reimbursement of ordered or plated meals or snacks. It may be difficult to judge the participant's intent to participate in the meal or snack service when adult day care centers use pre-plated meals/snacks or supervising adults serve the participants.

If a participant refuses a meal or snack that is pre-plated or served by a staff member, the adult day care center cannot claim the meal or snack for reimbursement. The participant must show intent to eat, such as coming willingly to the table, helping themselves to food or asking to be served, and attempting to eat the meal or snack. The participant does not have to eat the meal or snack for the adult day care center to claim reimbursement, but the participant must demonstrate the intent to eat.

When an enrolled adult who clearly has no intent to participate is forced to come to the table or put food on their plate, the adult day care center cannot claim the meal or snack for reimbursement.

There are various reasons that enrolled adults might not have the intent to participate in the meal or snack service. An enrolled adult could be feeling unwell, which can diminish their appetite or interest in food. Emotions such as tiredness, anger, or frustration can also play a significant role in an adult's willingness to participate in a meal or snack.

Examples of intent to participate in the meal service

The examples below illustrate the principle of an enrolled adult's intent to eat, and when adult day care centers can claim meals and snacks.

- **Example 1:** An enrolled adult typically chooses not to participate in the meal or snack service. A staff member forces the adult to come and sit at the table and serves the adult some food. The adult does not eat. Can the adult day care center claim the meal?

No. The enrolled adult has not chosen (i.e., has no intent) to participate in the meal or snack. Since the staff member knows this adult typically does not eat, it would be clear that the adult did not intend to participate.

If the enrolled adult willingly comes to the table and chooses to take a serving of food, but then does not eat, the meal or snack is reimbursable. In this case, the enrolled adult has the intent to eat, even if they did not follow through.

- **Example 2:** An enrolled adult who normally participates in the meal service comes to the table then chooses not to take any food. Can the adult day care center claim the meal?

No. The enrolled adult has chosen not to participate.

- **Example 3:** At snack time, an enrolled adult is upset. A staff member asks her to come to the table and she refuses. Can the adult day care center claim the meal?

No. The enrolled adult has chosen not to participate.

- **Example 4:** An enrolled adult willingly comes to the table at mealtime. He helps himself to several meal components, takes one bite, and then stops eating because he does not feel well. Can the adult day care center claim the meal?

Yes. The enrolled adult chose to participate and had the intent to eat, even though he changed his mind when he did not feel well.

- **Example 5:** An enrolled adult gets sick just before lunch and does not participate in the meal service. Can the adult day care center claim the meal?

No. The enrolled adult does not have the intent to participate in the meal.

Requirements for Congregate Meals and Snacks in the CACFP

The CACFP is a congregate feeding program. The USDA provides reimbursement only for congregate meals and snacks that are served to and consumed by participants in a supervised group setting on the premises of the CACFP adult day care center. Meals and snacks given to participants to take home are not reimbursable because participants who have left the premises are no longer participating in the activities of the adult day care center.

If an enrolled adult leaves the meal service early, uneaten meal or snack components cannot be packed “to go.” By leaving the adult day care center and consuming the food off site, the adult is not participating in the meal or snack service with the rest of the group. Adult day care centers cannot claim these meals and snacks for reimbursement.

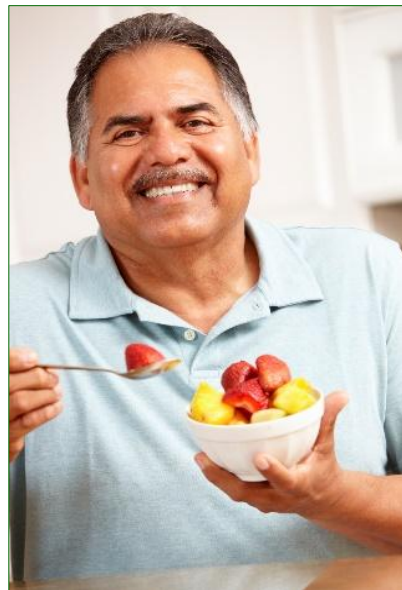
When Field Trip Meals are Allowed

Field trips are an allowable exception to the congregate meals requirement if the CACFP meals and snacks meet specific requirements.

Meals served on field trips must:

- meet the CACFP adult meal patterns;
- be served and consumed as part of a program-related function;
- follow the appropriate procedures for point-of-service meal counts (refer to “[Point-of-service Meal/Snack Counts](#)” in this section); and
- meet all food safety requirements.

Field trip meals that meet these requirements may be claimed for reimbursement



Prohibition of Gender Separation

In general, the USDA's nondiscrimination laws and policies in 7 CFR Parts 15, 15a, and 15b do not permit institutions participating in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs to separate participants on any protected basis during the service of reimbursable meals or snacks. Federal law prohibits discrimination based on gender at any educational institution receiving federal assistance.

USDA exception

The USDA allows one exception for non-school institutions and organizations. State agencies may approve exemptions allowing separation by gender during meal service without express prior approval from the USDA in the following circumstances:

- meal service at religious institutions operating under the dictates of the religion with which they are affiliated;
- meal service at facilities that fully separate by gender as part of their normal operations.

When requesting an exemption, the institution must submit the request in writing to the CSDE and specify which reason applies and why separation by gender is necessary.

The exception described above is the only acceptable base for gender separation during meal service in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. Any gender separation that is not based the USDA approval processes is strictly prohibited.

Situations that do not clearly fit into the exemption outlined above may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the CSDE in direct consultation with the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Regional Office, including the FNS Civil Rights Office and appropriate FNS National Office Child Nutrition Program staff.

For more information, refer to [USDA Memo SP 31 2015, CACFP 12-2015, and SFSP 14-2015: Guidance on Prohibition of Separation by Gender during Child Nutrition Program Meal Service.](#)

Guidance on Meeting the Meal Service Requirements

The resources below provide adult day care centers with information and guidance on meeting the meal pattern and meal service requirements for the CACFP.

- Links to the USDA's regulations and final rules for the CACFP meal patterns are available on the CSDE's [Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- The USDA provides guidance for implementing the CACFP through the policy memos on their [FNS Documents & Resources](#) webpage.
- The CSDE's [Operational Memoranda for the CACFP](#) webpage provides links to relevant USDA memos by year, and includes memos from the CSDE Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs on the requirements for the CACFP.
- The CSDE's [Program Guidance for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpage provides an alphabetical listing of links to information and guidance on the federal and state requirements for the CACFP, including the meal patterns, crediting foods and beverages, menu documentation, and meal service.
- The CSDE's [CACFP Updates e-newsletter](#) provides important guidance and resources to help adult day care centers comply with the federal and state requirements, and identifies deadlines for completing required activities.
- The CSDE's [Training for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage provides links to recorded trainings on a variety of topics.
- The CSDE's [Manuals and Guides for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage provides links to guides on a variety of topics, including food safety, menu planning and meal patterns, program administration, and special diets.

Adult day care centers may contact the CSDE's [CACFP staff](#) for more information and program-specific questions.



2 — Types of Meal Service

Adult day care centers may use any type of meal service that is appropriate to the individual needs and logistics of each program. Allowable types of meal service include pre-plated, cafeteria style, family style, and combination style.

Pre-plated meal service

With pre-plated meal service, staff pre-plate the minimum portion of each meal component, based on the meal pattern requirements for each age group. For example, staff prepare each child's plate for lunch with the minimum serving of MMA, grains, vegetables, and fruits, and portion each child's cup with the minimum serving of milk. The requirements and guidance for pre-plated meal service are summarized below.

- The meal or snack must provide the minimum portion size of all required meal components at the same time (refer to [“Overview of CACFP Adult Meal Patterns”](#) in section 1).
- Staff prepare plates and cups before participants are seated.
- Staff use appropriate serving utensils (e.g., scoops (dishers), spoodles, and serving spoons) to measure out the required portion for each age group. For more information, visit the [“Portion Control”](#) section of the CSDE's Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs webpage.
- Adult day care centers provide staff with appropriate training and guidance to ensure portions meet the minimum requirements. The CSDE's [Bite Size: Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\) Meal Patterns](#) training program provides detailed guidance on the CACFP meal patterns. Examples of training resources include the CACFP adult meal patterns (refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\) Adult Meal Patterns](#) and visit the [“CACFP Adult Meal Patterns”](#) section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage), crediting guidance (refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meeting the Crediting Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage), and completed menu forms, production records, and recipes (refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the [“Menu Forms and Production Records”](#) section of the CSDE's Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage). For more resources, refer to [section 5](#).

2 | Types of Meal Service

Additional guidance on the CACFP adult meal patterns is available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage.

Point-of-service meal counts for pre-plated meal service

Assigned staff must record point-of-service meal/snack counts when the participant receives all required meal components (refer to “[Point-of-service Meal/Snack Counts](#)” in section 1). This also applies to bagged meals/snacks handed out to participants during the meal or snack service.

Cafeteria-style Meal Service

With cafeteria-style meal service, participants go through the cafeteria serving line and food service staff serve each participant the required meal components of their meal. Participants may also self-serve some foods, such as selecting a carton of milk or a piece of fresh fruit. Some participants may require assistance from a supervising adult to safely carry their tray to a cafeteria table.

Point-of-service meal counts for cafeteria-style meal service

Staff must take meal counts for cafeteria-style meal service at the point of service (refer to “[Point-of-service Meal/Snack Counts](#)” in section 1). The point-of-service is typically at the end of the serving line, after all meal components of a reimbursable meal have been offered to the participant.



Family-style Meal Service

Family-style meal service allows participants to serve themselves from communal platters or bowls of food with assistance, if needed, from supervising staff members who sit with the participants. With family-style meal service, the minimum serving size of each meal component must be offered to each participant over the course of the meal. Unlike pre-plated meal service or cafeteria-style meal service, family-style meals allow some flexibility in the initial serving sizes because additional servings of each food are readily available at each table, and more can be served at any time.

Considerations for implementing family-style meal service

Adult day care centers must consider whether the program has the capacity to correctly implement family-style meal service. Trained staff members must be available to monitor the entire process at each table and accurately record meal or snack counts at the point of service. The implementation of family-style meal service might not be practical in adult day care centers due to individual participant restrictions, such as participants who are unable to select their own food.

Adult day care centers that choose to implement family-style meal service must follow the guidelines below to ensure compliance and eligibility for reimbursement.



Communicating with participants

Adult day care centers should explain the procedures and rules for family-style meal service to participants. Guidance on the OVS requirements is available in the CSDE's resource, [*Offer versus Serve in Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*](#).

Communal serving dishes and utensils

The meal components must be served in communal bowls or dishes that are placed on the table before participants are seated. Use appropriately sized unbreakable bowls, dishes, and serving utensils (such as tongs or spoons) for participants to serve themselves.

Offering the minimum portions

The communal serving dishes must contain the full serving (minimum meal pattern amount) of each meal component for all participants at the table. The milk pitcher must contain the full serving of the appropriate type of milk for each participant. The examples below illustrate this requirement.

- **Example 1:** The adult day care center's lunch menu provides the required ½-cup serving of the fruits component from ¼ cup of sliced apples. If a supervising staff member sits with three participants at the table, the communal serving plate or bowl must contain at least 2 cups of apple slices.
- **Example 2:** The CACFP adult breakfast and lunch meal patterns require 1 cup milk. If four participants sit at the table, the milk pitcher must contain at least 4 cups of milk or that amount must be readily available nearby. If the required amount of milk makes the pitcher too heavy, the pitcher can initially contain less milk if the remaining required quantity is readily available nearby.

If supervising staff members eat with the participants, the prepared amounts of food and milk must include the additional amounts for adult meals. The expense of extra creditable food produced for meals for supervising staff members during family-style meal service is an allowable cost for the CACFP.

Offering the required meal components

Family-style meal service allows participants to make choices in selecting foods and the serving size. Supervising adults should initially offer all participants the full serving of each meal component. Participants may select an initial amount that is less than the full serving.

Supervising adults should encourage participants to take additional portions and selections to meet the full serving, as appropriate. However, participants are not required to self-serve or consume the full serving.

Adult day care centers may still claim the meal or snack for reimbursement if a participant refuses a meal component or takes a smaller amount of a meal component.

Second meals and servings

During family-style meal service, participants may select additional servings beyond the minimum quantity required in the CACFP adult meal patterns. However, adult day care centers cannot claim additional reimbursement for second meals and larger servings.

Role of supervising staff members

During the service of the meal or snack, supervising staff members are responsible for actively encouraging (but not requiring) each participant to serve themselves the full portion. If a participant refuses or takes less than the full portion, the supervising staff member should offer the meal component to the participant again.

Eating with participants

The CSDE encourages supervising adults to eat with the participants and assist with serving as needed.

Meals and snacks that follow the guidelines for family-style meal service are reimbursable, even if supervising adults do not eat with the participants.

Monitoring point-of-service meal/snack counts

Supervising adults must be present and monitor the entire process at each table to ensure that participants take a reimbursable meal or snack. Supervising adults must follow the proper procedures for counting reimbursable meals and snacks at the point of service. Point-of-service meal/snack counts must be recorded while participants are eating, but no later than the conclusion of the meal or snack service (refer to “[Point-of-service Meal/Snack Counts](#)” in section 1).

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Point-of-service meal/snack counts must be recorded by trained supervising adults who are familiar with the CACFP meal pattern requirements and can recognize reimbursable meals and snacks.

Staff training

Adult day care centers must ensure that supervising adults are trained on the requirements and proper procedures for implementing family-style meal service.

Accommodating special dietary needs during family-style meal service

Adult day care centers must modify meals as appropriate for participants whose disability restricts their diet. The USDA also encourages adult day care centers to make optional modifications for non-disability reasons, such as requests related to religious or moral convictions, general health concerns, and personal food preferences.

To accommodate modified meals during family-style meal service, adult day care centers may pre-plate food substitutions on the participant's plate. The remaining meal components may be passed around "family style."

If a participant's dietary restriction requires avoidance of specific foods (such as food allergies or gluten intolerance), adult day care centers must consider the risk of cross-contact during meal service from serving utensils. It may be safer to pre-plate the participant's full meal to ensure that cross-contact does not occur.

The requirements for meal modifications are summarized in the CSDE's resource, [Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications for Adult Participants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage.

Combination-style Meal Service

Combination-style meal service combines pre-plated meal service and family-style meal service. Some foods in the meal are pre-plated while others are served family style. Combination-style meal service is a good option when a meal contains foods that cannot be easily or safely passed in common serving dishes from one child to another. Some examples include heavy or hot foods and liquids like soup, juice, and milk. The example below shows how an adult day care center could implement combination-style meal service for a CACFP meal.

- **Example:** The CACFP lunch menu includes a turkey sandwich, vegetable soup, garden salad, diced peaches, and milk. The vegetable soup and milk are pre-plated and the turkey sandwich, garden salad, and diced peaches are served family style. Supervising staff members portion the minimum required amount of vegetable soup into each participant's bowl and the minimum required amount of milk into each participant's cup. The turkey sandwich, garden salad, and diced peaches are offered in common serving dishes that are passed around the table so participants may serve themselves.

Adult day care centers that use combination-style meal service must ensure that staff meet the requirements for both types of meal service (family style and pre-plated). For all pre-plated foods, the quantities placed on plates and in cups by the supervising staff members must meet the minimum serving size required by the CACFP adult meal patterns. For all family-style foods, the quantities available in the common serving dishes provided by the food service staff must provide the minimum serving size for each participant seated at the table.

Point-of-service meal counts for combination-style meal service

Meal counts for combination-style meal service must follow the same requirements for family-style meal service (refer to "[Monitoring point-of-service meal/snack counts](#)" in this section. Supervising adults must complete point-of-service meal counts while participants are eating, but no later than the conclusion of the meal service (refer to "[Point-of-service Meal/Snack Counts](#)" in section 1).



3 — Offer versus Serve

Offer versus serve (OVS) is an optional approach to menu planning and meal service that allows participants to decline some of the foods offered in a reimbursable breakfast, lunch, or supper. OVS cannot be implemented at snack.

There are two requirements for reimbursable meals with OVS. One requirement applies to menu planning and the meals offered by the adult day care center and the other requirement applies to the foods selected by the participant.

Overview of OVS Requirements for Breakfast

For reimbursable breakfast, the adult day care center must offer at least four food items from the three meal components (grains, fruits/vegetables, and milk). These four items must include: 1) milk; 2) vegetables/fruits; 3) grains; and 4) MMA or one additional serving of fruits, vegetables, or grains. The four food items cannot include two servings of milk. The serving for each food item must be at least the minimum required quantities in the CACFP adult meal patterns (refer to “[Overview of CACFP Adult Meal Patterns](#)” in section 1).

The participant must select at least three food items. The participant may decline any one food item.

Overview Of OVS Requirements for Lunch

For a reimbursable lunch, the CACFP center must offer all five meal components (MMA, grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk). The serving for each food item must be at least the minimum required quantities in the CACFP adult meal patterns (refer to “[Overview of CACFP Adult Meal Patterns](#)” in section 1).

The participant must select at least three meal components. The participant may decline any two meal components.

Overview Of OVS Requirements for Supper

For a reimbursable lunch or supper, the CACFP center must offer all four meal components (MMA, grains, vegetables, and fruits). The serving for each food item must be at least the minimum required quantities in the CACFP adult meal patterns (refer to “[Overview of CACFP Adult Meal Patterns](#)” in section 1).

The participant must select at least three meal components. The participant may decline any one meal component.

Considerations for Implementing OVS

OVS might not be appropriate for some adult day care centers, depending on their type of meal service and the capabilities of the participants they serve. Adult day care centers should not implement OVS with a pre-plated meal delivery system or for participants who are unable to select their own food.

Meal Counts with OVS

Meal counts must be recorded at the point of service (refer to “[Point-of-service Meal/Snack Counts](#)” in section 1). For OVS, this is the moment in the meal service where staff can accurately determine that the participant has selected all minimum required meal components for a reimbursable meal. If the participant has not selected the minimum quantity of at least four food items for breakfast and at least three meal components for lunch or supper, the adult day care center cannot claim these meals for reimbursement.

Staff training

All personnel involved with meal service must be trained to recognize the required components of the CACFP adult meal patterns. Adult day care centers that implement OVS must provide staff members with additional training on how to identify reimbursable meals with OVS.

OVS Implementation Requires CSDE Approval

Adult day care centers that choose to use OVS must notify the CSDE and receive approval prior to beginning implementation.

OVS Resources

For more information on OVS, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Offer versus Serve in Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and [USDA Memo CACFP 02-2025: Offer Versus Serve and Family Style Meals in CACFP](#).

4 — Participant-provided Meal Components for Medical or Special Dietary Needs

Adult day care centers may choose whether they will allow participants or their guardians/caregivers to provide meal components as part of reimbursable meals for participants with special dietary needs. The CACFP regulations specify different requirements for these meal components depending on whether they are provided for disability or non-disability reasons.

Participant-provided Meal Components for Disability Reasons

Section [7 CFR 226.20\(g\)\(1\)\(iv\)](#) of the CACFP regulations allows participants or their guardians/caregivers to supply one or more meal components of a reimbursable meal for disability reasons. The adult day care center must provide at least one required meal component. A meal that meets these requirements is reimbursable.

Adult day care centers cannot require participants or their guardians/caregivers to supply one or more meal components of a reimbursable meal for a participant whose disability restricts their diet. Adult day care centers are responsible for providing appropriate meal modifications for disability reasons based on the medical statement from a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian.

Participant-provided Meal Components for Non-Disability Reasons

Section [7 CFR 226.20\(g\)\(2\)\(iii\)](#) of the CACFP regulations participants or their guardians/caregivers to supply one meal component of a reimbursable meal for non-disability reasons. This substitution may be due to medical or other special dietary needs, such as food preferences or restrictions due to religious, ethnic, moral, or other reasons. The term “special dietary needs” is intentionally broad to encompass a variety of situations that may not be classified as disabilities but can still affect or limit a participant’s diet.

The requirements for reimbursable meals depend on whether the participant-provided substitution is within or outside the CACFP adult meal patterns.

- **Substitutions within the CACFP adult meal patterns:** Meals are reimbursable when the participant or their guardian/caregiver provides one substitution that meets the CACFP adult meal patterns. An example is substituting one type of fruit for another, such as pears for peaches. For a reimbursable meal, the adult day care center must provide the participant with the remaining required CACFP meal components. A medical

4 | Participant-provided Meal Components

statement is not required when the substitution provided by the parent/guardian is within the CACFP adult meal patterns.

- **Substitutions outside the CACFP adult meal patterns:** When the substitution provided by the participant or their guardian/caregiver is a noncreditable food that does not meet the CACFP adult meal patterns, adult day care centers must obtain a medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian. For a reimbursable meal, the adult day care center must provide the participant with the remaining required meal components.

If the substitution provided by the participant or their guardian/caregiver does not meet the CACFP meal pattern requirements and the participant or their guardian/caregiver does not provide a medical statement, that food or beverage is a noncreditable food offered in addition to the reimbursable meal (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)). In this situation, the adult day care center must provide the participant with all required CACFP meal components for a reimbursable meal.

Required documentation for Participant/Guardian-provided Meal Components

The adult day care center must be approved by the CSDE to claim reimbursement for meals with foods or beverages provided by the participant or their guardian/caregiver. The adult day care center must submit a written request to the CSDE that includes the information below.

1. Detail the participant's medical or special dietary need that requires a meal component provided by the participant or their guardian/caregiver. If the substitution does not meet the CACFP adult meal patterns, attach a copy of the medical statement signed by the participant's state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian. For guidance on the requirements for medical statements, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the "[Medical Statements](#)" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.
2. Indicate the specific foods and beverages that will be provided by the participant or their guardian/caregiver and the meal components to which they belong.

Participants or their guardians/caregivers may supply one or more meal components for disability reasons but no more than one meal component for non-disability reasons.

3. Include a statement of assurance that the adult day care center will serve all other required meal components of the reimbursable meal.

If the request is approved, the CSDE will issue a written response for the acceptable meal components provided by the participant or their guardian/caregiver. This CSDE approval applies only to the individual participant for whom the request has been granted. The adult day care center must maintain this approval on file with the participant's other medical records.

For detailed guidance on meal modifications for disability or non-disability reasons, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage.

Food Safety Considerations

When determining whether to allow foods brought from home, adult day care centers must consider food safety issues and the liability that might arise if a participant gets a foodborne illness. The FDA Food Code applies to all foods served in adult day care centers, regardless of whether they are prepared on site or brought from home.

FDA Food Code requires approved source

The [FDA Food Code](#) requires that all foods served in food service establishments must be from an approved source (i.e., commercial supplies under regulatory control) and transported properly at required temperatures. The FDA Food Code applies to all foods served in adult day care centers, regardless of whether they are prepared on site or brought from home.

Foods sent into the adult day care center from a private home have not originated from an approved source. Adult day care centers cannot ensure that food brought from home is safe from microbial contamination or cross-contact with potential food allergens.

There are potential liability issues if adult day care centers serve foods that have not been directly received from a regulated source (such as an approved food service vendor) or stored, cooked, and served by trained food service personnel.

4 | Participant-provided Meal Components

Adult day care centers that choose to allow participants and their guardians/caregivers to provide meal components should have policies in place to address food safety standards. These policies should include:

- clearly labeling all foods with the participant's name, date, and type of food;
- storing foods at an appropriate temperature until they are eaten; and
- prohibiting participants from sharing foods with other participants.

For information and resources on food safety, visit the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and the DPH's [Food Protection Program](#) webpage. The CSDE encourages adult day care centers to check with their local health department regarding appropriate food safety procedures for foods sent from home.



5 — Resources

This section includes additional resources and websites for the CACFP. More links to information on the federal and state requirements and guidance for the CACFP are available on the CSDE's [Program Guidance for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpage. For a comprehensive list of resources on the CACFP adult meal patterns and crediting requirements, refer to the CSDE's [Meal Pattern and Crediting Resources for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Patterns](#).

Meal Pattern Requirements

[Bite Size: Meeting the Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\) Meal Patterns](#) (“Bite Size Meal Pattern Training” section of CSDE’s Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/bite-size-meal-pattern-training>

[CACFP Meal Pattern Updates](#) (CSDE’s Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) webpage):
https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/child-and-adult-care-food-program#CACFP_Meal_Pattern_Updates

[Guide to Meal Modifications for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/guide_meal_modifications_cacfp_adults.pdf

[Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

[Menu Forms](#) (“Menu Forms and Production Records” section of CSDE’s Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/menu-forms-and-production-records>

[Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks](#) (USDA webpage):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>

[Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

[Summary of Final Rule Updates to the Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/summary_final_rule_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf) (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/summary_final_rule_cacfp_meal_patterns.pdf

[USDA Final Rule Correction: CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the HHFKA of 2010 \(81 FR 75671\)](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act):

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>

[USDA Final Rule: CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 \(81 FR 24347\)](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/fr-042516):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/fr-042516>

[USDA Final Rule: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines For Americans \(89 FR 31962\)](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for):

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/25/2024-08098/child-nutrition-programs-meal-patterns-consistent-with-the-2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-for>

[USDA Memo CACFP 08-2017: Questions and Answers on the Updated Meal Pattern Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/questions-and-answers-updated-meal-pattern-requirements-child-and-adult-care-food-program):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/questions-and-answers-updated-meal-pattern-requirements-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

[USDA Memo CACFP 15-2016: Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the CACFP](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/optional-best-practices-further-improve-nutrition-cacfp):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/optional-best-practices-further-improve-nutrition-cacfp>

[USDA Memo SP 19-2024, CACFP 07-2024, and SFSP 12-2024: Initial Implementation Memorandum: Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SP19_CACFP07_SFSP12-2024os.pdf):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SP19_CACFP07_SFSP12-2024os.pdf

[USDA Memo CACFP 17-2017: Documenting Meals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/documenting-meals):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/documenting-meals>

Program Guidance

[Adult Day Care: A Child and Adult Care Food Program Handbook](#) (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/adult-day-care-child-and-adult-care-food-program-handbook>

[CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) (USDA webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/cacfp-adult-day-care-centers/documents>

[CACFP Halftime: Thirty on Thursdays Training Webinar Series](#) (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-halftime-thirty-thursdays-training-webinar-series>

[CACFP Handbooks](#) (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/handbooks>

[CACFP Training Tools](#) (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/cacfp/trainers-tools>

[CACFP Updates](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/cacfp-updates>

[Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\) Documents and Resources](#) (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/resources>

[Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\) Instructions](#) (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/fns-instructions-for-child-nutrition-programs>

[Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/food-safety-for-child-nutrition-programs>

[Forms for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/cacfp-adult-day-care-centers/forms>

[Laws and Regulations for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/laws-and-regulations-for-child-nutrition-programs>

[Manuals and Guides for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/manuals-and-guides-for-child-nutrition-programs>

[Operational Memoranda for the CACFP](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/operational-memoranda-for-the-cacfp>

[Program Guidance for CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/program-guidance-cacfp-adults>

[Resources for Child Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/resources-for-child-nutrition-programs) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/resources-for-child-nutrition-programs>

[Training for Child Nutrition Programs](https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/training-for-child-nutrition-programs) (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/training-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Glossary

Administrative Review (AR): A periodic review of an institution's operations of the Child Nutrition Programs, conducted by the Connecticut State Department of Education to monitor performance and assess compliance with all USDA regulations.

CACFP sponsor: A public or private nonprofit organization that is entirely responsible for the administration of the CACFP in one or more day care homes, child care centers, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, or adult day care centers. In some situations, for-profit institutions may also be eligible to participate in the CACFP. For more information, refer to the section [7 CFR 226.2](#) of the CACFP regulations.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): The USDA's federally assisted meal program providing nutritious meals and snacks to children in child care centers, family day care homes, and emergency shelters, and snacks and suppers to children participating in eligible at-risk afterschool care programs. The CACFP also provides meals and snacks to adults who receive care in nonresidential adult day care centers. For more information, visit the USDA's [CACFP](#) webpage and the CSDE's [CACFP](#) webpage.

Child Nutrition Programs: The USDA's federally funded programs that provide nutritious meals and snacks to children, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Snack Program (ASP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP also provides nutritious meals and snacks to the frail elderly in adult day care centers. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

combination-style meal service: A method of meal service that combines pre-plated meal service and family-style meal service. Some foods in the meal are pre-plated while others are served family style.

congregate meals and snacks: Meals and snacks served to and consumed by children in a supervised group setting on the premises of the CACFP facility.

Dietary Guidelines for Americans: A federal document that provides science-based advice for Americans ages 2 and older to promote health and reduce risk for chronic diseases through diet and physical activity. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture jointly publish the *Dietary Guidelines* every five years. This document forms the basis of federal food, nutrition education and information programs. For more information, visit the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) webpage.

disability: A condition in which a person has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [*Guide to Meal Modifications for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*](#).

family-style meal service: A method of meal service that allows participants to serve themselves from common platters of food with assistance from supervising adults, if needed. For more information, refer to "[Family-style Meal Service](#)" in section 3.

food item: A specific food offered within the meal components that comprise reimbursable meals in the CACFP. A food item may contain one or more meal components or more than one serving of a single component. For example, macaroni and cheese is one food item that provides two meal components (grains and MMA). A 2-ounce whole grain bagel is one food item that provides 2 oz eq of grains.

meal components: The five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates. For information on the individual meal components, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage.

meal pattern: The required meal components and minimum servings that schools and institutions participating in the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs must provide to receive federal reimbursement for meals and snacks served to participants. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage.

meals: Refer to "reimbursable meals" in this section.

medical statement: A document signed by a state-licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian that identifies the specific medical conditions and appropriate meal modifications for a participant with special dietary needs due to disability or non-disability reasons. The USDA requires that medical statements for disability reasons must include: 1) information about the participant's physical or mental impairment that is sufficient to allow the adult day care center to understand how it restricts the participant's diet; 2) an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the participant's disability; and 3) if appropriate, the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and visit the "[Medical Statements](#)" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.

menu item: Any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk that is part of the reimbursable meal. Menu items consist of food items.

menu of record: The official menu that documents exactly what is served each day in the CACFP facility. This provides a record of the meal components and portion sizes served to all enrolled participants and provides documentation for the number of CACFP meals and snacks claimed for reimbursement.

offer versus serve (OVS): An optional approach to menu planning and meal service that allows participants to decline some of the foods offered in a reimbursable breakfast, lunch, or supper. OVS is not allowed at snack. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [*Offer versus Serve in Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*](#).

point-of-service meal/snack counts: The moment in the meal service where staff can accurately determine that the participant has been served all required meal components for a reimbursable meal or snack. For more information, refer to "[Point-of-service Meal/Snack Counts](#)" in section 1.

pre-plated meal service: A method of meal service where staff pre-plate each child's plate and cup with the minimum portion of each meal component, based on the meal pattern requirements for each age group. For more information, refer to "[Pre-plated meal service](#)" in section 2.

registered dietitian (RD) or registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN): The Commission on Dietetic Registration defines a RD and RDN as someone who has completed a minimum of a bachelor's degree at a U.S. regionally accredited university or college and course work accredited or approved by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND); completed an ACEND-accredited supervised practice program at a health-care facility, community agency, or a foodservice corporation or combined with undergraduate or graduate studies; passed a national examination administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR); and completed continuing professional educational requirements to maintain registration. For more information, visit the AND's [What is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist](#) website and the CDR's [Registered Dietitian \(RD\) or Registered Dietitian Nutritionist \(RDN\) Certification](#) website.

reimbursable meals and snacks: Meals and snacks that meet the meal pattern requirements of the USDA regulations and are eligible for USDA funds. Reimbursable meals and snacks contain the minimum serving of each required meal component.

serving size or portion: The weight, measure, or number of pieces or slices of a food or beverage. For meals and snacks to be reimbursable, adult day care centers must provide the minimum servings specified in the CACFP adult meal patterns.

state-licensed healthcare professional: An individual who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law and is recognized by the State Department of Public Health (DPH). In Connecticut, recognized medical authorities include physicians (MD), physician assistants (PA) and certified physician assistants (PAC), doctors of osteopathy (DO), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN), i.e., nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and certified nurse anesthetists who are licensed as APRNs. For more information, refer to the CSDE's [*Guide to Meal Modifications for Adult Day Care Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*](#) and visit the "[Medical Statements](#)" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage.



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