

# Overview of Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the School Breakfast Program

The requirements for implementing OVS for breakfast are defined in [7 CFR 220.8\(e\)](#) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) regulations for the School Breakfast Program (SBP). OVS is a concept that applies to menu planning and the determination of reimbursable meals for grades K-12 in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), SBP, and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP. OVS allows students to decline a certain number of food items in the meal and select the foods they prefer to eat, while reducing food cost and waste. OVS is optional at breakfast for all grades. OVS is not allowed for preschoolers (ages 1-4) or the Afterschool Snack Program (ASP) of the NSLP.

Detailed guidance on OVS is available in the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#). For additional resources, visit the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

## Overview of OVS at Breakfast

All breakfast menus must meet the daily and weekly [SBP meal pattern](#) requirements. The daily requirements are the minimum amount of the three food components (grains, fruits, and milk). The weekly requirements include the juice limit (no more than 50 percent), minimum ounce equivalents (oz eq) of grains, whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement (at least 80 percent of weekly grains must be WGR), and dietary specifications for calories, saturated fat, sodium and trans fat.

OVS applies to the daily meal pattern requirements. School food authorities (SFAs) must offer four food items from the three food components in at least the full serving (minimum daily amount) for each grade group. For a reimbursable breakfast under OVS, students must select at least three food items, including at least ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitutions, if offered). The definition of food items and food components for breakfast is different from lunch. Food items are also credited differently at breakfast.



- A **food component** is one of the three food groups that comprise reimbursable breakfasts, including grains (with optional meat/meat alternates (MMA) substitutions), fruits (with optional vegetable substitutions), and milk.
- A **food item** is a specific food offered within the three food components for the breakfast meal pattern. One food item equals 1oz eq of the grains component, ½ cup of the fruits component, and 1 cup of the milk component. **Note:** This definition applies only to breakfast. Food items credit differently for OVS at lunch.

Table 1 summarizes the daily SBP meal pattern requirements for grades K-12 and the number of items that students may decline under OVS.

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**Table 1. Summary of OVS requirements for breakfast**

- **Menu planning:** The breakfast menu must meet all daily and weekly requirements of the [SBP meal pattern](#). SFAs must offer the minimum daily serving of at least 4 food items from the three food components.
- **Reimbursable meal:** Students must select at least 3 food items, including at least ½ cup of fruits, vegetables, or both.

Component	Minimum amount	1 food item =	Requirements
<b>Milk</b>	1 cup	<b>1 cup</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must offer a variety (at least two different choices) of low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk, either unflavored or flavored.</li> <li>• At least one milk choice must be unflavored.</li> </ul>
<b>Fruits</b>	1 cup	<b>½ cup</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit juice and vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. “Juice” includes 100 percent juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice (unless the canned fruit is drained).</li> <li>• Dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins = ½ cup = 1 food item</li> <li>• Vegetables may substitute for fruits.</li> <li>• Raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup of raw spinach = ½ cup = 1 food item</li> </ul>
<b>Grains <sup>4</sup></b>	1 oz eq	<b>1 oz eq</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must be WGR (at least 80 percent of weekly grains) or enriched.</li> <li>• May offer optional MMA substitutions after offering 1 oz eq of grains (1 oz eq MMA = 1 oz eq grains = 1 food item).</li> <li>• MMA substitutions count toward the weekly grains requirement and dietary specifications.</li> </ul>

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For breakfasts to be reimbursable under OVS, SFAs must meet the criteria below. SFAs should plan breakfast menus to make it easy for students to select (and food service staff to identify) reimbursable meals.

- **Menu planning:** Breakfast menus must include at least 4 food items from the three food components (milk, fruits, and grains). The planned serving for each food item must be at least the minimum daily serving for each grade group. The 4 food items may include two servings of grains (either two of the same grain or two different grains), one serving of grains and one serving of MMA substitution, two servings of fruits or vegetable substitutions (either two of the same fruit/vegetable, two different fruits/vegetables, or one fruit and one vegetable) but cannot include two servings of milk. For information on the SBP meal patterns, visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage and refer to section 1 of the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#).
- **Optional MMA substitutions:** SFAs may choose to substitute MMA for grains after offering 1 oz eq of grains. For example, a breakfast menu that includes a 1 oz eq whole-grain roll (grains component) may also include 1 oz eq of low-fat cheese (MMA component) offered as a substitution for the grains component. MMA substitutions count toward the minimum weekly grains requirement and the weekly dietary specifications. For more information, refer to section 3 of the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#) and visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- **Optional vegetable substitutions:** SFAs may substitute vegetables for the fruits component at any breakfast, without including vegetables from the other subgroups in the weekly menu. The USDA allows this flexibility through June 30, 2024. For more information, refer to the "[Vegetable Substitutions at Breakfast](#)" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- **Duplicate servings:** Duplicate servings are two servings of the same food, such as two apples or two bagels. When the fruits component (including vegetable substitutions) or grains component (including MMA substitutions) includes two or more choices, SFAs may allow students to select duplicate servings. For example, if the breakfast menu offers any two 1 oz eq choices from the grains component, students may select two servings of the same grain item, such as two servings of cereal. If the breakfast menu offers any two ½-cup choices from the fruits component, students may select two servings of the same fruit, such as two servings of fruit salad. SFAs must clearly communicate this information on the breakfast menu and cafeteria signage and must train food service staff to recognize reimbursable meals with duplicate servings.

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- **Larger amounts:** SFAs may serve larger amounts of any component if the weekly breakfast menu does not exceed the USDA’s dietary specifications (nutrition standards) for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For information on meeting the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE’s *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*. **Note:** SFAs must serve additional grains on some days to meet the SBP meal pattern’s minimum weekly requirements for each grade group. Serving the minimum daily 1 oz eq of grains will not meet the weekly requirements. For more information, refer to section 4 of the CSDE’s *Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12*.
- **Unit pricing:** Meals must be priced as a unit, i.e., students pay the same price regardless of whether they take three or more food items. SFAs must establish one price for a complete reimbursable breakfast in the paid meal category and one price for a complete reimbursable breakfast in the reduced-price meal category. SFAs may set different unit prices (tiered pricing) for various combinations of foods offered as a reimbursable breakfast, such as one price for a meal with a larger breakfast entree and another price for a meal with different combinations of foods. However, all students, including those eligible for free and reduced-price meals, must be allowed to select any reimbursable breakfast. Breakfasts with a higher unit price must be available at no cost for all free-eligible students and at no more than 30 cents for all reduced-eligible students.
- **Required signage:** SFAs must post two different types of cafeteria signage that clearly communicates the food items for each daily menu choice and indicates what students must select for a reimbursable meal. The first type of signage must identify all planned reimbursable breakfasts (i.e., all offered full meals), including the food items and portions and any choices or combination of choices available within each component. This signage must be near or at the beginning of each serving line. The second type of signage must indicate what food items and amounts students may select for a reimbursable breakfast with OVS, based on the planned daily menu for each grade group. This signage must be posted at all applicable points in the serving line where the food items are available.

For example, if the SFA offers all fruit and vegetable choices for grades 9-12 in ½-cup servings, the breakfast menu and cafeteria signage must indicate that students may select up to two servings of fruits and two servings of vegetables with each meal. For more information and examples of signage, refer to the CSDE’s *Signage Requirements for the NSLP and SBP* and section 1 of the CSDE’s *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*, and visit the “[Signage and Posters](#)” section of the CSDE’s OVS webpage.

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- **Required student selections:** Students must select at least 3 food items, including at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruit (or vegetable substitutions, if offered) and the full serving of at least two other food items. Selections of less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruits or vegetables do not count as a food item for OVS, unless the student also selects additional fruits or vegetables to provide at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup. To encourage selections of reimbursable meals, SFAs should offer all fruits and vegetables in  $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings.



- **Declining foods:** After selecting the required 3 food items (including at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruits or vegetables), students may decline any other food items or may take smaller portions of the declined food items. However, selections of less than the full serving do not count as a food item for OVS. For example, if the breakfast menu provides 1 oz eq of grains from two  $\frac{1}{2}$ -oz eq WGR mini blueberry muffins, students must take both muffins to count as 1 food item for OVS. One muffin ( $\frac{1}{2}$  oz eq) does not credit because it is less than the full serving.

## Counting Food Items at Breakfast

The USDA allows flexibility for counting fruits and grains as food items in school breakfast menus, depending on the SFA's menu planning needs and what works best for the SBP. These flexibilities do not apply to OVS at lunch.

- **Fruits component (including optional vegetable substitutions):** A  $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving of fruit (or vegetable substitution) credits as 1 food item. SFAs may choose to credit 1 cup of fruits or vegetables as either 1 or 2 food items.
- **Grains component (including optional (MMA substitutions):**  
A 1-oz eq serving of grains counts as 1 food item. SFAs may count foods provide more than 1 oz eq as more than 1 food item if the additional amount provides at least the full 1 oz eq. For example, the menu planner may count a whole-grain muffin or bagel that contains 2 oz eq of grains as 1 or 2 food items. Amounts less than 1 oz eq do not count for OVS. For example, a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  oz eq whole-grain muffin or  $1\frac{3}{4}$  oz eq bagel counts as 1 food item for OVS. For detailed guidance, refer to section 3 of the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#).

## Deciding how to count 1 cup of fruits or vegetables

Offering all fruit and vegetable choices in  $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings is a best practice to help encourage students' selections of reimbursable meals. However, for some situations it may be advantageous to count 1 cup of fruit as one item. An example is a breakfast menu that offers a variety of fresh fruit choices, including 125-138 count apples, 150-count bananas, and 138-count oranges.

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The USDA's *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (FBG) indicates that a 125-138 count apple credits as 1 cup of fruit, which means the menu planner could choose to count this apple as 2 food items for OVS. However, the FBG indicates that the banana and orange each credit as  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruit. It could be confusing to students and food service staff to count one apple as 2 food items but count one banana or one orange as only 1 food item. In this case, it might be simpler to count all fresh fruit choices as 1 food item. This makes it easy for students to understand what they can select for a reimbursable meal and helps staff to identify reimbursable meals.

## Deciding how to count grains with multiple oz eq

The advantage of counting grains with multiple oz eq as more than 1 food item is helping to increase reimbursable meals. Students who select a grain food that counts as more than 1 food item only need one more food item ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruits or vegetables) for a reimbursable breakfast.

The advantage of counting grains with multiple oz eq as 1 food item is encouraging students to select additional foods for a more nutritious breakfast. Students who select a grain food that counts as 1 food item must also select at least two more food items for a reimbursable breakfast, including at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruits or vegetables.

There are several factors for menu planners to consider when determining which option might work best for their SBP. Some considerations include the types of food items offered, the number of other food items offered in the meal, what meals students typically select (based on production record data), the cost of menu items, and how the offered food items affect students' ability to select reimbursable meals and staff's ability to recognize reimbursable meals.

## Examples of OVS at Breakfast

Tables 2-4 show examples of OVS at breakfast. For additional guidance and more OVS examples, refer to the CSDE's *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*.



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**Table 2. OVS examples for a breakfast menu with 5 food items**

<b>Planned breakfast menu</b>	<b>Meal pattern components</b>	<b>Food items</b>	
Whole-wheat bagel, 2 ounces	Grains (G), 2 oz eq	2 G	
Strawberries, ½ cup	Fruits (F), ½ cup	1 F	
Orange slices, ½ cup	F, ½ cup	1 F	
Choice of low-fat or fat-free milk, 1 cup	Milk (M), 1 cup	1 M	
<b>Students must select at least 3 food items including at least ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitution, if offered).</b>			
<b>Student selects</b>	<b>Food items <i>Must be at least 3</i></b>	<b>Do the 3 food items include at least ½ cup of F or V? <i>Must be "Yes"</i></b>	<b>Reimbursable meal?</b>
Strawberries (1 F) Milk (1 M)	2	Yes	<b>No.</b> The selected meal contains only 2 food items (1 F and 1 M).
Bagel (2 G) Strawberries (1 F)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 G and 1 F).
Bagel (2 G) Milk (1 M)	3	No	<b>No.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 G and 1 M) but is missing at least ½ cup of F.
Strawberries (1 F) Orange (1 F) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 F and 1 M).
Bagel (2 G) Orange (1 F) Milk (1 M)	4	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 4 food items (2 G, 1 F, and 1 M).



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**Table 3. OVS examples for a breakfast menu with 5 food items including MMA substitution**

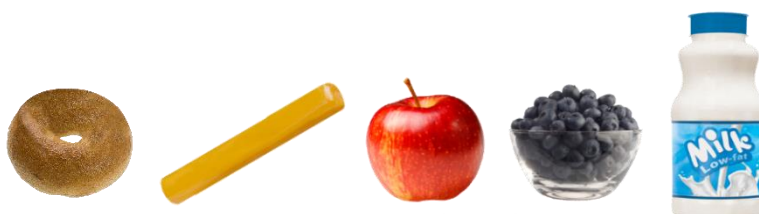
Planned breakfast menu	Meal pattern components	Food items	
Whole-wheat bagel, 1-ounce slice	G, 1 oz eq	1 G	
Low-fat string cheese, 1 ounce <i>MMA substitution</i>	G, 1 oz eq	1 G	
Apple slices, ½ cup	F, ½ cup	1 F	
Blueberries, ½ cup	F, ½ cup	1 F	
Choice of low-fat or fat-free milk, 1 cup	M, 1 cup	1 M	
<b>Students must select at least 3 food items including at least ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitution, if offered).</b>			
Student selects	Food items <i>Must be at least 3</i>	Do the 3 food items include at least ½ cup of F or V? <i>Must be “Yes”</i>	Reimbursable meal?
Bagel (1 G) String cheese (1 G) Blueberries (1 F)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (1 F and 2 G including 1 G from MMA substitution).
Bagel (1 G) String cheese (1 G) Milk (1 M)	3	No	<b>No.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (1 M and 2 G including 1 G from MMA substitution) but is missing at least ½ cup of F.
String cheese (1 G) Apple slices (1 F) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (1 G from MMA substitution, 1 F, and 1 M).
Bagel (1 G) Blueberries (1 F) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (1 G, 1 F, and 1 M).
Bagel (1 G) Apple slices (1 F) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (1 G, 1 F, and 1 M).
Blueberries (1 F) Apple slices (1 F) String cheese (1 G)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 F and 1 G from MMA substitution).



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**Table 4. OVS examples for a breakfast menu with choices from 4 food items**

<b>Planned breakfast menu</b>		<b>Meal pattern components</b>	<b>Food items</b>
<b>Grains:</b> <i>May choose up to 2</i> <sup>1</sup> Whole-grain cereal flakes, 1 cup <sup>2</sup> <i>MMA substitutions:</i> Whole-grain muffin, 2 ounces <sup>2</sup> Low-fat yogurt, ½ cup Oatmeal, ½ cup <sup>2</sup> Cheese stick, 1 ounce Whole-wheat bagel, 1 ounce <sup>2</sup> Peanut butter, 2 tablespoons		G, 1 oz eq	1 G
<b>Fruit:</b> <i>May choose 2 fruits or 1 fruit and 1 juice</i> <sup>3</sup> Applesauce, ½ cup    Orange, ½ cup Banana, ½ cup    Blueberries, ½ cup Peaches, ½ cup    100 percent juice, ½ cup Apple, ½ cup		F, 1 cup	2 F
<b>Milk:</b> <i>May choose 1</i> Low-fat or fat-free milk		M, 1 cup	1 M
<b>Students must select at least 3 food items including at least ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitution, if offered).</b>			
Student selects	Food items <i>Must be at least 3</i>	Do the 3 food items include at least ½ cup of F or V? <i>Must be "Yes"</i>	Reimbursable meal?
Yogurt, 2 servings (2 G) Blueberries (1 F)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 G from MMA substitutions and 1 F).
Cheese sticks, two (2 G) Banana (1 F)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 G from MMA substitutions and 1 F).
Cereal, two servings (2 G) Milk (1 M)	3	No	<b>No.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 G and 1 M) but is missing at least ½ cup of fruit.



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<b>Table 4, continued</b>			
<b>Student selects</b>	<b>Food items</b> <i>Must be at least 3</i>	<b>Do the 3 food items include at least ½ cup of F or V? Must be “Yes”</b>	<b>Reimbursable meal?</b>
Yogurt (1 G) Cheese stick (1 G) Applesauce (1 F)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 G from MMA substitutions and 1 F).
Oatmeal (1 G) Applesauce (1 F) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (1 G, 1 F, and 1 M).
Muffin (1 G) Orange (1 F) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (1 G, 1 F, and 1 M).
Cereal (1 G) Yogurt (1 G) Blueberries (1 F)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 G including 1 from MMA substitution and 1 F).
Yogurt, 2 servings (2 G) Blueberries (1 F)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 G from MMA substitutions and 1 F).
Bagel (1 G) Peanut butter (1 G) Juice (1 F)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 G including 1 G from MMA substitution and 1 F).
Blueberries (1 F) Peaches (1 F) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes	<b>Yes.</b> The selected meal contains 3 food items (2 F and 1 M).
<p><sup>1</sup> This menu allows any two choices from the grains component, including MMA substitutions. Students may select two of the same food item or two different food items.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> SFAs must document that the product or recipe serving provides the required oz eq or minimum creditable grains. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, <a href="#">Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP</a> and <a href="#">Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP</a>.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> This menu credits each ½-cup serving of fruit as one food item and allows two choices. Students may select two of the same fruit, two different fruits, or one fruit and one juice.</p>			

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## Strategies for OVS Implementation

The three critical elements for successful OVS implementation include strategic menu planning, clear communication, and staff training. The following guidelines help SFAs incorporate these elements for successful OVS implementation.

### Menu planning

SFAs decide how to offer the required food items for OVS at breakfast. These decisions are important because they determine the foods and amounts that students must take for a reimbursable meal with OVS. SFAs can increase the likelihood that students will select reimbursable meals by using menu planning strategies that encourage students to take at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of fruits or vegetables and the full serving (minimum daily amount) of at least two other items.

SFAs should be consistent with menu planning and crediting food items to help minimize confusion among students and school food service staff. For example, decide whether to count a 2 oz eq WGR bagel as 1 or 2 food items, then credit it the same way for all breakfast menus. Consistent crediting makes it easier for students to understand what foods they can choose and helps staff to identify reimbursable meals.

The best practices strategies below for grains and fruits help simplify the menu planning process and make it easier for students to select (and school food service staff to identify) reimbursable breakfasts with OVS.

#### *Strategies for grains (including MMA substitutions)*

- **Offer the full serving of all grain choices:** Offer all grains in at least 1 oz eq so any choice credits as at least one food item for OVS. For example, offer a 1-oz eq muffin (one food item) instead of two  $\frac{1}{2}$ -oz eq muffins (one food item).
- **Offer the same oz eq for all choices of food items:** Offer the same oz eq for all choices of grains and MMA substitutions so each choice credits as the same number of food items for OVS. For example, offer 2 oz eq of all muffins, bagels, and RTE breakfast cereal or offer 1 oz eq of all yogurts, cheese sticks, and peanut butter. This makes it easier for students to understand what they can take and simpler for staff to identify reimbursable meals. When the choices are different serving sizes, such as a 1 oz eq grain and a 2 oz eq grain, it can be confusing for students and staff to understand what is required for a reimbursable meal.
- **Offer breakfast choices that provide at least two food items:** Some examples include a 2 oz eq WGR muffin (three grains), a 3-oz eq whole-grain bagel (three grains), and a breakfast sandwich made with 1 oz eq English muffin and 1 oz eq egg (three grains)

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including one MMA substitutions). Students who select a menu choice with at least two food items only need ½ cup of fruits (or optional vegetable substitutions) for a reimbursable breakfast.

## *Strategies for fruits (including vegetable substitutions)*

- **Offer all fruit and vegetable choices in ½-cup servings:** Offer all grades a variety of fruits and vegetables in ½-cup servings and allow students to select up to two servings. This makes it easier for students to meet the OVS requirement for at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables. Provide clear information on breakfast menus and cafeteria signage that instructs students on the amount they can select with each breakfast.
- **Offer all fruits in ½-cup servings:** Offer all grades a variety of fruits in ½-cup servings. Allow students in grades K-5 and 6-8 to select at least one serving. Allow students in grades 9-12 to select at least two servings. This makes it easier for students to meet the OVS requirement for at least ½ cup of fruits or vegetables.
- **Plan fruit and vegetable choices to meet the weekly juice limit:** Plan fruit and vegetable choices to meet the weekly juice limit and review breakfast menus for compliance. Provide clear information on breakfast menus and cafeteria signage that instructs students on the amount of juice they can select with each breakfast. **Note:** Serving more fruit than juice provides the best nutrition for students. Juice is more calorie dense than whole fruits and vegetables and does not provide the same nutritional benefits.

## **Communication**

SFAs must clearly communicate the daily menu options to food service staff and students. Breakfast menus and cafeteria signage must indicate what foods students may select for a reimbursable meal (refer to “[Required signage](#)” in this document). Food service staff must understand the OVS requirements and be able to accurately identify reimbursable meals at the point of service (refer to “[Staff training](#)” in this document).

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## Staff training

OVS training is critical for SFAs to ensure that staff implement correct meal counting and claiming with OVS. School food service staff must understand the OVS requirements, be able to help students select the required quantities of the food items for reimbursable meals, and be able to accurately identify reimbursable meals at the point of service. The point of service is the point in the food service operation where staff can make an accurate determination that a reimbursable free, reduced-price, or paid meal has been served to an eligible child. This is typically at the end of the serving line after the child has had the chance to receive all components of the reimbursable meal.

Training must also ensure that all staff implement correct meal counting and claiming procedures with OVS. For more information, visit the CSDE's [Meal Counting and Claiming for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

SFAs should conduct OVS training at least annually for servers, cashiers, and other applicable food service staff. Training is also important whenever changes occur to the school nutrition programs, such as new staff, new grade configurations, and new menu items. OVS training is most effective when SFAs use actual examples from their own school menus.



In addition to regular OVS training, a recommended best practice for cafeteria managers is to conduct a daily pre-service meeting with all applicable staff to review each menu choice and what students must select for a reimbursable meal. This helps to ensure that all staff (including substitutes) can identify reimbursable meals.

OVS training meets the USDA's professional standards requirements for annual training. OVS is listed under the subcategory of "Serving Food (2200)" for the key area of "Operations (2000)" in the USDA's list of training topics for professional standards: 2220 Offer versus Serve and 2240 Serving Lines. For more information, refer to the USDA's resources, [Professional Standards Training Topics](#) and [Guide to Professional Standards for School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the CSDE's [Professional Standards for School Nutrition Professionals](#) webpage.

Job-specific training is also required for non-food service employees whose responsibilities include duties related to the operation of school nutrition programs, such as teachers, teachers' aides, and other applicable staff who conduct in-classroom meal counting and claiming. For guidance on OVS with classroom meals, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Classroom Meals in the NSLP and SBP](#).

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## Resources

Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit\\_Cereals\\_SNP\\_grades\\_K-12.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Cereals_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf)

Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit\\_Enriched\\_Grains\\_SNP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Enriched_Grains_SNP.pdf)

Crediting Foods for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit\\_Juice\\_SNP\\_grades\\_K-12.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Juice_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf)

Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit\\_Smoothies\\_SNP\\_grades\\_K-12.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/Credit_Smoothies_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf)

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Fruits Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#Fruits>

Grains Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#Grains>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#MMA>

Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/WGR\\_Requirement\\_SNP\\_grades\\_K-12.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Crediting/WGR_Requirement_SNP_grades_K-12.pdf)

# Overview of OVS in the School Breakfast Program

Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning-Guide-for-School-Meals>

Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Offer-versus-Serve-for-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Offer versus Serve Guidance for the NSLP and SBP (USDA):

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

Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/OVS\\_guide\\_SNP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/OVS_guide_SNP.pdf)

Offer versus Serve Materials (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offer-versus-serve-national-school-lunch-program-posters>

Offer versus Serve Tip Sheet for School Food Service Managers: School Breakfast Program (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offer-vs-serve-breakfast-program-tip-sheet>

Offering Meats and Meat Alternates at School Breakfast: Grades K-12 (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offering-meats-and-meat-alternates-school-breakfast>

Program Guidance for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Program-Guidance-School-Nutrition-Programs>

School Breakfast Program (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/School-Breakfast-Program>

Signage Requirements for the NSLP and SBP (CSDE):

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/Signage\\_Requirements\\_NSLP\\_SBP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/Signage_Requirements_NSLP_SBP.pdf)

USDA Memo SP 06-2023, CACFP 05-2023 and SFSP 02-2023: Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023: Effect on Child Nutrition Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/consolidated-appropriations-act-2023-effect-programs>

USDA Regulations for the SBP: Offer versus serve for grades K through 12 (7 CFR 220.8(e)):

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220#p-220.8\(e\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220#p-220.8(e))

Vegetables Component for Grades K-12 (CSDE's Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#Vegetables>

What's in a Meal Module 16: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the SBP (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Meal Patterns for Grades K-12):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Pattern-Training-Materials>



# Overview of OVS in the School Breakfast Program



For more information, refer to the CSDE's *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*, and visit the CSDE's [OVS](#) webpage or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/Overview\\_OVS\\_SBP.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/Overview_OVS_SBP.pdf)

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
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