

Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) require school food authorities (SFA) to post cafeteria signage that provides clear information about the daily planned reimbursable meals and all allowable choices. The purpose of this signage is to prevent unintentional purchases of a la carte items and help students choose a reimbursable meal.

Two Signage Requirements

SFAs must post two different types of cafeteria signage. This signage must clearly communicate the food components for each daily menu choice and indicate what students must select for a reimbursable meal.

1. **Identify foods and amounts offered for all planned reimbursable meals:** Section [7 CFR 210.10\(a\)\(2\)](#) of the NSLP regulations and section [7 CFR 220.8\(a\)\(2\)](#) of the SBP regulations require that SFAs must post signage to identify the planned reimbursable meals (i.e., all offered full meals), including the components and portions and any choices or combination of choices available within each component. This signage must be located near or at the beginning of each serving line. **Note:** This requirement applies to all schools and institutions, including those that do not implement offer versus serve (OVS) and those that implement family-style meal service.
2. **Identify required student selections for reimbursable meals with OVS:** Schools that implement OVS must indicate the minimum amount of each food component (lunch) or food item (breakfast) that students must select for a reimbursable meal, 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 components or food items are available. For example, if the high school lunch menu offers fruits and vegetables in ½-cup servings and allows students to select two servings of fruits and two servings of vegetables to meet the required 1-cup serving for grades 9-12, the cafeteria signage must clearly communicate that students may select up to two servings of fruit and two servings of vegetables with each meal. This signage must be located on the serving line where the fruit and vegetable options are available. For more information on signage with OVS, refer to the CSDE's [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#) and visit the “[Signage for OVS](#)” section of the CSDE's OVS webpage.

SFAs may choose how to identify the foods that are part of reimbursable meals, based on their facilities, layout, and other considerations. Some examples of acceptable signage include menu boards, posters, signs, labels, and table tents.

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SFAs are not required to provide detailed information about the food components, such as identifying the vegetable subgroups. However, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) strongly encourages SFAs to provide detailed information whenever possible, within the constraints of the menu and serving line. This helps promote the school nutrition programs and makes it easier for students to understand what reimbursable meals include.

Reviewing Signage for Compliance

The checklist below helps SFAs determine if cafeteria signage meets the USDA requirements. Answer these questions for each cafeteria serving line. If any answers are “no,” the SFA must update the cafeteria signage as applicable.

- Is signage available for each daily lunch and breakfast choice and each serving line?
- Is signage clearly visible?
- Is signage located at or near the beginning of each serving line?
- OVS only*: Is signage located at the applicable points in the serving line near each food component (lunch) or food item (breakfast)?

A helpful best practice strategy to determine if the cafeteria signage is clear and effective is to conduct a cafeteria walk-through. Review the signage at the beginning of the serving line and continue through the entire serving line to the point of service.



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Resources

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

<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

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: National School Lunch Program (USDA):

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

Signage for OVS (CSDE's Offer versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs webpage):

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

USDA Regulations for the NSLP: Offer versus serve for grades K through 12 (7 CFR 210.10(e)):

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210#p-210.10\(e\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210#p-210.10(e))

What's in a Meal Module 15: Offer versus Serve (OVS) in the NSLP (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>

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>

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For more information, visit the “[Signage for OVS](#)” section of 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/SDE/Nutrition/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/OVS/Signage_Requirements_NSLP_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
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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