

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program

OVS is a concept that applies to menu planning and the determination of reimbursable meals in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs. OVS allows children to decline a certain number of food components in the meal and select the foods they prefer to eat, while reducing food cost and waste. SFSP sponsors have the option of implementing OVS for breakfast, lunch, and supper. OVS cannot be implemented for snacks.

OVS is implemented differently for breakfast and lunch/supper. The OVS requirements for each meal service are summarized below. For specific guidance on the SFSP meal pattern requirements, visit the [“Meal Patterns for the SFSP”](#) section of the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [SFSP](#) website.

The USDA allows OVS only for school food authority (SFA) sponsors of the SFSP.

Requirements for Breakfast

The three food components of the [SFSP breakfast meal pattern](#) include vegetables/fruits (VF), grains/breads (GB), and milk (M). Meat/meat alternates (MMA) are optional. A “food component” is one of the three food groups that comprise reimbursable breakfasts in the SFSP.

OVS at breakfast is based on food items, not food components. A “food item” is a specific food from the three food components. For example, a yogurt and fruit parfait that contains at least ½ cup of yogurt and ½ cup of fruit provides two food items (MMA and VF) for OVS. Table 1 summarizes the OVS meal pattern requirements for breakfast.

Table 1. OVS requirements for breakfast in the SFSP

Required meal pattern components for OVS ¹	Minimum number of food items offered	Minimum number of food items selected
1 serving VF 1 serving GB 1 serving M 1 serving additional food item from VF, GB, or MMA ²	4	3

¹ The serving of each component must be at least the minimum amount in the SFSP meal pattern.
² The additional food item must be different from the other food items. Breakfast menus cannot include two servings of the same food item, e.g., two servings of toast. Larger food items that provide more than one serving by weight or volume, such as a 2-ounce roll or 1 cup of fruit, count as only one food item under OVS at breakfast.

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program

To implement OVS at breakfast, SFSP menus must offer at least four food items from the three food components. Children must select at least three food items. Breakfast accompaniments such as maple syrup, cream cheese, butter, and jam do not credit toward the SFSP meal pattern. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#).

For a breakfast to be reimbursable under OVS, SFSP sites must meet the criteria below.

- The planned serving size for each food item must be at least the minimum required quantity specified in the SFSP meal pattern. SFSP sites must offer the full serving of at least four different food items to all children.
- Children decide which foods to decline, if any. Children must select the full serving of at least three of the four food items offered. Children may take smaller portions of declined food items; however, these foods do not count toward the reimbursable meal.
- Children may decline any one of the required food items, including milk.

The examples below show how OVS is implemented at breakfast.

Breakfast example 1

- GB: Whole-grain bagel, 2 ounces
- VF: Strawberries, ½ cup
- VF: Orange slices, ½ cup
- M: Low-fat milk (8 fluid ounces)



Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal (at least 3 food items)?
Bagel Milk	2	No. The selected meal contains only two food items (GB and M).
Bagel Orange slices Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (GB, VF, and M).
Bagel Strawberries Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (GB, VF, and M).
Strawberries Orange slices Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (two VF and M).

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program

Breakfast example 2

- GB: Whole-grain bread (1 ounce)
- VF: Red grapes (½ cup)
- MMA: Peanut butter (2 Tablespoons)
- M: Low-fat milk (8 fluid ounces)



Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal (at least 3 food items)?
Bread Peanut butter Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (GB, MMA, and M).
Peanut butter Grapes Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (MMA, VF, and M).
Bread Peanut butter Grapes	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (GB, MMA, and VF).
Bread Peanut butter Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (GB, MMA, and M).

Breakfast example 3

- GB: Whole-grain cereal (1 ounce)
- GB: Whole-grain toast (1 ounce)
- VF: Cantaloupe (½ cup)
- M: Low-fat milk (8 fluid ounces)



Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal (at least 3 food items)?
Bread Peanut butter	2	No. The selected meal contains only two food items (GB and MMA).
Cereal Milk	2	No. The selected meal contains only two food items (GB and M).
Cereal Cantaloupe	2	No. The selected meal contains only two food items (GB and VF).
Cereal Toast Milk	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (two GB and M).

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program

Requirements for Lunch and Supper

The four food components of the [SFSP lunch and supper meal pattern](#) include meat/meat alternates (MMA), vegetables/fruits (VF), grains/breads (GB), and milk (M). A “food component” is one of the four food groups that comprise reimbursable lunches/suppers in the SFSP.

At lunch and supper, OVS is based on food components not food items. A “food item” is a specific food from the four food components. It may contain one or more food components or more than one serving of the same component. For example, a hamburger patty on a whole-grain bun is one food item that contains two food components (MMA and GB). A selection of three different ½-cup servings of fruit such as peaches, applesauce and pears, contains three food items from one food component (VF).



To implement OVS at lunch and supper, SFSP menus must offer all four food components and children must select at least three food components. Lunch accompaniments such as salad dressing, ketchup, mustard, relish, butter and potato chips do not credit toward the SFSP meal pattern. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Noncreditable Foods in the Summer Food Service Program](#). Table 2 summarizes the OVS meal pattern requirements for lunch and supper.

Table 2. OVS Requirements for lunch and supper in the SFSP

Required meal pattern components for OVS ¹	Minimum number of food components offered	Minimum number of food components selected
1 serving MMA 2 servings VF 1 serving GB 1 serving M	4	3

¹ The serving of each component must be at least the minimum amount in the SFSP meal pattern. Two servings from the same food component count as only one food component for OVS, e.g., two ½-cup servings of corn, or one ½-cup serving of peaches and one ½-cup serving of broccoli. Larger food items that provide more than one serving by weight or volume, such as a 2-ounce whole-grain roll or 1 cup of fruit, count as only one food component for OVS at lunch.

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program

For a lunch or supper to be reimbursable under OVS, SFSP sites must meet the criteria below.

- The planned serving size for each food component must be at least the minimum required quantities specified in the SFSP meal pattern. SFSP sites must offer the four food components to all children, which includes five food items.
- Children decide which foods to decline, if any. Children must select the full serving of at least three of the four food components offered. Children may take smaller portions of declined foods; however, these foods do not count toward the reimbursable meal.
- Children only need to select one of the two servings of vegetables and/or fruits to count as one VF component for OVS. If children select both servings of vegetables and/or fruits, they still count as only one VF component for OVS.
- Children may decline any one food component (MMA, VF, GB, and milk).

The examples below show how OVS is implemented at lunch and supper.

Lunch/supper example 1

- MMA: Turkey (1 ounce) and cheese (1 ounce) sandwich
- GB: Whole-wheat bread (2 slices)
- VF: Carrot sticks (½ cup)
- VF: Red apple (½ cup)
- M: Low-fat milk (8 fluid ounces)



Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal (at least 3 food components)?
Turkey and cheese sandwich Milk	3	Yes. The meal contains three food components (MMA, GB and M).
Turkey and cheese sandwich Apple	3	Yes. The meal contains three food components (MMA, GB, and VF).
Apple Carrots Milk	2	No. The meal contains two food components (VF and M).
Turkey and cheese sandwich	2	No. The meal contains only two food components (MMA and GB).
Apple Milk	2	No. The meal contains only two food components (VF and M)

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program

Lunch/supper example 2

MMA: Yogurt (½ cup) and Swiss cheese cubes (1 ounce)

GB: Whole-grain roll (1 ounce)

VF: Fresh peach (½ cup)

VF: Green apple (½ cup M: Low-fat milk (8 fluid ounces

M: Low-fat milk (8 fluid ounces



Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal (at least 3 food components)?
Yogurt Peach Apple Roll	2	No. The meal contains only two food components (VF and G). Children must take the yogurt and cheese cubes together to provide one serving of MMA.
Yogurt Cheese cubes Roll Milk	3	Yes. The meal contains three food components (MMA, GB, and M). The yogurt and cheese cubes together provide one serving of MMA.
Roll Peach Apple Milk	3	Yes. The meal contains three food components (GB, VF, and M).
Roll Apple Milk	3	Yes. The meal contains three food components (GB, VF, and M).
Yogurt Peach Roll Milk	3	Yes. The meal contains three food components (VF, GB, and M). The yogurt alone does not credit as MMA because it is less than one serving.

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program

Lunch/supper example 3

- MMA: Cheese pizza (2 ounces of cheese)
- GB: Pizza crust (3 ounces)
- VF: Coleslaw (½ cup)
- VF: Green grapes (½ cup)
- M: Low-fat milk (8 fluid ounces)



Child selects	Number of food items	Reimbursable meal (at least 3 food components)?
Cheese pizza	2	No. The meal contains only two food components (MMA and GB)
Cheese pizza Coleslaw	3	Yes. The meal contains three food components (MMA, GB, and VF).
Coleslaw Grapes	1	No. The meal contains only one food component (VF).
Cheese pizza Milk	3	Yes. The meal contains three food components (MMA, GB, and M).
Cheese pizza Grapes	3	Yes. The meal contains three food components (MMA, GB, and VF).

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program

Resources

Administration Guide: Summer Food Service Program (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/2016-administrative-guidance-sponsors>

Crediting Foods in the SFSP (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/documents>

Crediting Summary Charts for the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/crediting_summary_charts_sfsp.pdf

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

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

How to Do OVS (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer-how-do-offer-versus-serve-ovs>

Meal Patterns for the SFSP (“How To” Section of CSDE’s SFSP webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/summer-food-service-program/how-to#MealPatterns>

Noncreditable Foods in the Summer Food Service Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/noncreditable_foods_sfsp.pdf

Nutrition Guide: Summer Food Service Program (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/nutrition-guide>

Requirements for the Grains/Breads Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/component_grains_breads_sfsp.pdf

Requirements for the Meat/Meat Alternates Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/component_mma_sfsp.pdf

Requirements for the Milk Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/component_milk_sfsp.pdf

Requirements for the Vegetables/Fruits Component of the Summer Food Service Program Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/creditingfsfp/component_vegetables_fruits_sfsp.pdf

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Meal Patterns (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/sfsp/mealpattern/sfsp_meal_patterns.pdf

Video: Offer versus Serve in the SFSP (USDA):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs_JEjO0_Us

Video: SFSP Meal Service Types (Washington Office of Superintendent Public Instruction):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nveiMN7aSq4>

Offer Versus Serve (OVS) in the Summer Food Service Program

For more information, visit the CSDE's [SFSP](#) website or contact the [Summer Meals 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/sfsp/mealpattern/sfsp_meal_patterns.pdf.

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