

OSPI Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Reference Sheet

Meal Service Styles

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) helps ensure children and adults have access to healthy, balanced meals throughout the day in a variety of Meal Service Styles as indicated below. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal service styles ensure children receive at least the minimum required portion of food.

Requirements

- ✓ Food components must be served in sufficient amounts to provide the minimum portion requirements for each component.
- ✓ All components must be served at the same time, either on the table (family style) or given to each participant at the beginning of the meal (pre-plated).
- ✓ "Point of Meal Service" (POS) counts must be taken for all types of meal service.
- ✓ Program operators must not use food or beverages as a form of reward or punishment.

Meal Service Styles

✓ Pre-Portioned Meal Service

The easiest way to ensure the correct portion size is served and make meal counts easier

- All food components are pre-portioned for each participant.
 - Meal components are served on a plate or in a bowl.
 - Fluid milk is provided in a cup.
- Minimum portion sizes of each required component must be served together to each participant at the beginning of the meal.

POS Meal Count: Meal count may be taken once all children have been served the pre-portioned meal with all required components including milk (as applicable).

✓ Family Style Meal Service

Promotes mealtime learning experiences to help participants develop positive attitudes toward nutritious foods, share in group eating situations, and develop good eating habits.

- All required meal components are placed on the table at the same time.
- Adequate amounts of each food item must be placed on the table to provide at least the minimum portions for each participant and adult to be served (if adult is participating in the meal service).
- Participants may serve themselves from the serving dishes.



- Supervising adults may help the participants who are not able to serve themselves. If an adult serves the item, they must serve the participant the full minimum portion.
- Allows participants to eat together and to make food choices based on individual appetites and food preferences.
- A supervising adult must be seated at each table to actively encourage participants to take the full required minimum portion of each food component.
- The supervising adult must offer the food item again later in the meal if the participant initially refused the food or took a very small portion. This is called the “Second Offering” – this must be done to claim the meal.
- Cup or glass size must be large enough to hold the full minimum portion. Clear cups are recommended as they assist the supervising adult in seeing the fluid milk portion.
- Second meals cannot be claimed for reimbursement.

POS Meal Count: Meal count may be taken once all children have been offered all meal components and encouraged by the supervising adult to try food components not initially taken.

- **Cafeteria Style Meal Service**

This style is common in At-Risk Afterschool Meal Programs and is a way to prepare children who will be transitioning from child care settings to the school districts.

- Participants are served food from a cafeteria line. This type of meal service is considered pre-plated.
- Participants must be served the minimum required amounts of all components their first time through the line and the participants cannot decline to take any food item.
- Adults must supervise and ensure that minimum portion requirements are met.

POS Meal Count: Meal count may be taken for each child as they receive their pre-plated meal and milk (as applicable).

- ✓ **Offer vs Serve**

- Is an option for At-Risk Afterschool Programs that serve meals prepared by Local Education Agencies (LEA) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) – whether they are in a school or another location.
- Meals must be consumed on the premises.
- OVS is not allowed at snack under any Child Nutrition Program.
- For more information on this type of meal service reference [SP 41-2015](#).

POS Meal Count: Meal count may be taken for each child after they select their meal components, and the supervising adult verifies a complete meal has been taken.

- **Buffet**

- This is not allowable as a meal service option in CACFP.

Reference

- 7 CFR 226.20
- SP 41-2015 – Updated Offer vs Serve Guidance for the NSLP and SBP Beginning SY2015-16

Resources

- Independent Child Care Centers – A CACFP Handbook
- At-Risk Afterschool Meals – A CACFP Guide
- Offer Versus Serve in the CACFP

Reference

- CNS – Child Nutrition Services
- CACFP – Child and Adult Care Food Program
- LEA – Local Education Agency
- NSLP – National School Lunch Program
- OSPI – Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- SBP – School Breakfast Program
- USDA – United States Department of Agriculture