

Offer Versus Serve in the Child and Adult Care Food Program



If your site serves meals to at-risk afterschool or adult participants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), you may use a type of meal service called Offer Versus Serve (OVS). OVS allows children and adults to decline some of the food offered in a reimbursable breakfast, lunch, or supper. OVS may not be used at snacks or in other CACFP settings. OVS can help reduce food waste and give children and adults more choices.

Understanding OVS: Know the Terms

- **Food component**—the name of a **group** of foods in a reimbursable meal. **Food components** include milk, vegetables, fruits, grains, and meat and meat alternates. At breakfast only, vegetables and fruits are one combined component. This means you can serve vegetables, fruits, or a combination of both to meet this requirement.
- **Food item**—foods that are part of a **food component**. For example, broccoli is a **food item** in the vegetables **food component**.

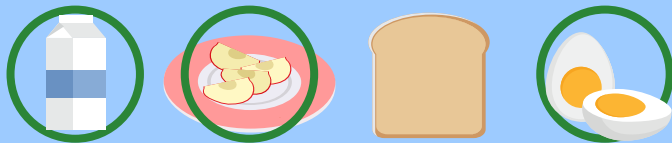
How to Use OVS at Meals

OVS at Breakfast

1. Offer these 3 **food components** at breakfast:
 - Milk
 - Vegetables and/or Fruits
 - Grains
2. Offer at least 4 different **food items** at breakfast, at least 1 from each **food component** above. The 4th food item can come from the vegetables or fruits, grains, or meat/meat alternates component.
3. Ask the child or adult to **choose at least 3** different **food items**.

OVS at Lunch and Supper

1. Offer these 5 **food components** at lunch and supper:
 - Milk*
 - Vegetables
 - Fruits
 - Grains
 - Meat and meat alternates
2. Offer at least one **food item** from each component.
3. Ask the child or adult to choose **food items** from **3 or more food components**.



Note: The 4th food item can be selected as well.



Note: The child or adult can select food from all 5 components. Foods from **at least 3 components** are needed for a reimbursable meal.

***For Adult Participants Only:** Milk is optional at supper. If milk is not offered, the adult still needs to select food items from 3 different food components to have a reimbursable meal.

Tips About Food Items

- All food items offered at breakfast, lunch, and supper must be different food items. For example, while apple slices and applesauce are two forms of apples, they are considered the same food item. Likewise, oranges and orange juice are the same food item.
- The full minimum serving size of a food item must be taken in order for it to count towards a reimbursable meal.



Try It Out!

Use the information on this worksheet to answer the questions below.

1. Your adult day care center uses OVS at breakfast and offers low-fat (1%) milk, apple slices, oatmeal, and bananas. Karen is a participant who chooses milk, oatmeal, and apple slices, and took the full minimum serving size of each item. Is Karen's breakfast reimbursable? Why or why not?

2. Your at-risk afterschool site uses OVS at supper and offers non-fat (skim) milk, roasted turkey, roasted broccoli, steamed carrots, fruit salad, and whole-wheat rolls. David is a participant who chooses the turkey, broccoli, and carrots, and took the full minimum serving size of each item. Is this supper reimbursable? Why or why not?

3. Your at-risk afterschool site uses OVS at supper, and offers tuna salad, sliced tomatoes, peaches, pita bread, and low-fat (1%) milk. Your participant Anna would like all the food offered, but only wants half of the minimum serving size of each food. Would this supper be reimbursable? Why or why not?

Answer Key:

1. Yes, Karen's breakfast is reimbursable. For OVS at breakfast, the operator is required to offer at least 4 food items that include: 1 item from the milk component (low-fat (1%) milk), 1 item from the vegetable/fruits component (apple slices), 1 item from the grains component (oatmeal), and 1 additional food item from grains, meat/meat alternates, or vegetables/fruit component (bananas). To make a reimbursable breakfast, a participant must choose 3 or more of the items offered, and must take at least the full minimum serving size of each item. Because Karen chose 3 of the items offered (milk, oatmeal, and apple slices), and took the full minimum serving size of each item, this breakfast is reimbursable.

2. No, David's supper is not reimbursable. For OVS at supper for at-risk afterschool sites, the operator is required to offer at least 1 food item from the following 5 components: milk (non-fat (skim) milk), meat and meat alternates (roasted turkey), vegetables (roasted broccoli and steamed carrots), fruits (fruit salad), and grains (whole-wheat rolls). In all cases, the participant must choose food items from at least 3 different components in order to make a reimbursable supper, and must take at least the minimum serving size of each. Because the roasted broccoli and the steamed carrots are both in the vegetables component, David's supper only has 2 components (meat/meat alternates and vegetables) and needs food from another component to make up a reimbursable supper. He should add the minimum serving size of fruit salad, whole-wheat rolls, and/or milk, to make a reimbursable supper.

3. If Anna takes only half of the minimum serving size of each food offered, her supper would not be reimbursable. The full minimum serving size of items from at least three different components must be taken in order to make up a reimbursable supper.