

Offer versus Serve in At-Risk Afterschool Centers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) final rule, *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, allows offer versus serve (OVS) in at-risk afterschool programs, effective October 1, 2017. OVS is an optional approach to menu planning and meal service that allows children to decline some of the foods offered in a reimbursable breakfast, lunch, or supper. OVS is not allowed at snack.

CACFP at-risk afterschool centers that choose to use OVS must notify the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) prior to implementation.

Note: If a National School Lunch Program (NSLP) sponsor operates the CACFP at-risk afterschool meals program and follows the NSLP meal pattern, they must follow the NSLP OVS requirements. The NSLP OVS requirements are different from the CACFP OVS requirements. For more information, see the CSDE's [Offer Versus Serve for School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. CACFP sponsors must follow the CACFP meal pattern. If a CACFP at-risk afterschool meals sponsor chooses to implement OVS, they must follow the CACFP OVS requirements.

Food Components and Food Items

Under OVS, the determination of a reimbursable meal is based on the child's selection of a minimum number of food components (lunch and supper) or food items (breakfast).

- A food component is one of the food groups that comprise a reimbursable meal. The breakfast meal pattern requires three components (milk, vegetables and fruits, and grains). The lunch/supper meal pattern requires five components (milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates).
- A food item is a specific food offered within the five food components. For example, a hamburger on a whole-grain bun is one food item that contains two components (grains and meat/meat alternates). A ½-cup serving of applesauce and a ½-cup serving of blueberries are two food items from one component (fruits).



For a reimbursable breakfast, the CACFP center must offer at least four food items and the child must select at least three food items. For a reimbursable lunch or supper, the CACFP center must offer all five food components and the child must select at least three food components.

OVS in At-Risk Afterschool Centers in the CACFP

CACFP menus can provide food components as single foods (such as pasta, fruit, and vegetables) or as combination foods, which contain more than one food component. Examples include lasagna, beef stew, pizza, burritos, chef's salad, and smoothies made with yogurt and pureed fruit. For example, macaroni and cheese contains pasta (grains component) and cheese (meat/meat alternates component). Combination foods generally cannot be separated (such as a burrito or pizza) or are not intended to be separated (such as hamburger on a bun or turkey sandwich).

Signage

If the CACFP menu offers combination foods, or two or more food items from one food component such as bread and rice, the CACFP facility must provide instructions or signs about the OVS requirements. This signage must indicate what choices make up a reimbursable meal and let children know that they cannot select two of the same food items or components. For example, a child cannot select two pieces of toast and milk for a reimbursable breakfast because this choice provides only two different food items. A child cannot select two servings of chicken and one serving of rice for a reimbursable lunch because this choice provides only two components.

Breakfast

The CACFP at-risk afterschool center must offer the minimum serving of at least four food items from the three food components (see table 1). For a reimbursable breakfast, the child must select at least three food items.

Table 1. OVS breakfast requirements for ages 6-12 and 13-18	
At-risk afterschool center must offer at least four food items from three food components ¹	Child must select
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One serving of milk (unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored/ flavored fat-free) ² 2. One serving of vegetables and fruits 3. One serving of grains ³ 4. One serving of meat/meat alternates or one additional serving of fruits and vegetables or grains ^{2,4} 	At least three different food items (can decline any one food item)
<p>¹ Each food item must provide the full serving in the CACFP breakfast meal pattern.</p> <p>² The USDA's <i>CACFP Best Practices</i> recommends only unflavored milk.</p> <p>³ Through September 30, 2021, grains must meet the applicable weights (groups A-E) or volumes (groups H-I) in the USDA's grain servings chart, or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. For more information, see the CSDE's handouts, <i>Grain Servings for the CACFP</i> and <i>Calculation Methods for Grain Servings in the CACFP</i>. Effective October 1, 2021, the required amounts for the grains component change to ounce equivalents. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, <i>Grain Ounce Equivalents for the CACFP</i>.</p> <p>⁴ The fourth food item may be a meat/meat alternate item (1 ounce), a different vegetable or fruit item (½ cup), or a different grain item (1 serving).</p>	

OVS in At-Risk Afterschool Centers in the CACFP

Breakfasts in at-risk afterschool centers must meet the criteria below to be reimbursable under OVS.

- Breakfast menus must include the **full serving** (the required amount in the CACFP breakfast meal pattern) of at least four different food items. For example, a breakfast menu of milk (milk), banana (vegetables/fruits), and two servings of toast (grains), such as one slice of enriched cinnamon-raisin bread and one slice of whole-wheat bread, is not reimbursable because the two servings of toast are the **same** food item (grains).
- Larger servings of the **same** component count as only one food item. For example, 1 cup of strawberries counts as one food item (vegetables/fruits). A 3-ounce whole-wheat bagel or two servings of whole-grain toast each count as one food item (grains).
- If the breakfast menu offers the full daily serving of a component as two **separate** food items, children must take **both** servings to count as one food item for OVS. For example, the breakfast meal pattern requires $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables/fruits component for ages 6-18. If the at-risk afterschool center offers $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sliced peaches and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of pineapple tidbits, children must select both servings to count as one food item (vegetables/fruits). The breakfast meal pattern requires one serving of the grains component. If the at-risk afterschool center offers $\frac{1}{2}$ serving of cereal and $\frac{1}{2}$ serving of whole-grain muffin, children must select both to count as one food item (grains component).
- Amounts **less** than a full serving do not count as a food item for OVS. For example, a selection of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cantaloupe does not count as a food item because $\frac{1}{2}$ cup is the full serving for the vegetables/fruits component at breakfast.
- Children may decline any one of the four food items, including milk.
- If a combination food contains two or more food items and the breakfast menu offers only four food items, children cannot decline the combination food. For example, a breakfast menu offers a fruit smoothie made with yogurt (meat/meat alternates) and strawberries (vegetables/fruits); a whole-grain muffin (grains); and milk (milk). Children must select the smoothie (two food items) and one other food item for a reimbursable breakfast.



OVS in At-Risk Afterschool Centers in the CACFP

Examples of OVS at breakfast

Tables 2 and 3 show examples of OVS at breakfast for ages 6-18 in at-risk afterschool centers.

Table 2. Sample breakfast menu 1 (four food items)		
CACFP meal pattern for OVS	Planned menu	Food items
Grains (G), 1 serving	Whole-grain bagel, 2 ounces	1 G
Vegetables and Fruits (VF), ½ cup	Strawberries, ½ cup	1 VF
Milk (M), 8 fluid ounces ¹	Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk, 1 cup	1 M
Meat/Meat Alternate (MMA) (1 ounce) or additional VF (½ cup) or G (1 serving)	Orange slices, ½ cup	1 VF
Children must select the minimum serving of at least three different food items		
Child selects	Food items (minimum daily serving)	Reimbursable meal?
Strawberries (1 VF) Milk (1 M)	2	No. The selected meal contains only two food items (1 VF and 1 M).
Bagel (1 G) Strawberries (1 VF)	2	No. The selected meal contains only two food items (1 G and 1 VF).
Bagel (1 G) Milk (1 M)	2	No. The selected meal contains only two food items (1 G and 1 M).
Strawberries (1 VF) Orange slices (1 VF) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (2 VF and 1 M).
Bagel (1 G) Orange slices (1 VF) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (1 G, 1 VF, and 1 M).
Strawberries (1 VF) Orange slices (1 VF) Bagel (1 G)	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (2 VF and 1 G).
¹ Milk must be unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free. Flavored fat-free milk may be served to ages 6 and older, but the USDA's <i>CACFP Best Practices</i> recommends only unflavored milk.		

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Table 3. Sample breakfast menu 2 (five food items)

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CACFP meal pattern for OVS	Planned menu	Food items
Grains (G), 1 serving	Whole-wheat toast, 1-ounce slice	1 G
Vegetables and fruits (VF), ½ cup	Cantaloupe slices, ½ cup Blueberries, ½ cup	2 VF
Milk (M), 8 fluid ounces ¹	Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk, 1 cup	1 M
Meat/Meat Alternate (MMA) (1 ounce) ² or additional VF (½ cup) or G (1 serving)	Swiss cheese cubes, 1 ounce	1 MMA
Children must select the minimum serving of at least three different food items		
Child selects	Food items (minimum daily serving)	Reimbursable meal? At least 3 food items
Toast, two servings (1 G) Blueberries (1 VF)	2	No. The selected meal contains only two food items (1 G and 1 VF). Two servings of the same food count as only one food item.
Toast (1 G) Swiss cheese (1 MMA) Blueberries (1 VF)	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (1 G, 1 M/MA, and 1 VF).
Toast (1 G) Blueberries (1 VF) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (1 G, 1 VF, and 1 M).
Toast (1 G) Swiss cheese (1 MMA) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (1 G, 1 MMA, and 1 M).
Swiss cheese (1 MMA) Cantaloupe slices (1 VF) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (1 M/MA, 1 VF and 1 M).
Toast (1 G) Cantaloupe slices (1 VF) Milk (1 M)	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (1 G, 1 VF, and 1 M).

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Table 3. Sample breakfast menu 2 (five food items), *continued*

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CACFP meal pattern for OVS	Planned menu	Food items
Children must select the minimum serving of at least three different food items		
Blueberries (1 VF) Cantaloupe slices (1 VF) Swiss cheese (1 MMA)	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three food items (2 VF and 1 M/MA).
<p>¹ Milk must be unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free. Flavored fat-free milk may be served to ages 6 and older, but the USDA’s <i>CACFP Best Practices</i> recommends only unflavored milk.</p> <p>² Without OVS, breakfast menus can substitute a meat/meat alternate for the entire grains component up to three times per week. A 1-ounce serving of the meat/meat alternates component substitutes for 1 ounce of the grains component. OVS breakfast menus can include a serving of meat/meat alternates every day as the fourth food item.</p>		

OVS at Lunch and Supper

The CACFP at-risk afterschool center must offer all five food components (see table 4). For a reimbursable meal, children must select the minimum serving of at least three of the five components.

Table 4. OVS lunch and supper requirements for ages 6-18

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Center must offer five components ¹	Child must select
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One serving of milk (unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored/flavored fat-free) ² 2. One serving of fruits 3. One serving of vegetables 4. One serving of grains 5. One serving of meat/meat alternates 	At least three food components
<p>¹ Each food component must provide the full serving in the CACFP lunch/supper meal pattern.</p> <p>² The USDA’s <i>CACFP Best Practices</i> recommends only unflavored milk.</p> <p>³ Through September 30, 2021, grains must meet the applicable weights (groups A-E) or volumes (groups H-I) in the USDA’s grain servings chart, or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. For more information, see the CSDE’s handouts, <i>Grain Servings for the CACFP</i> and <i>Calculation Methods for Grain Servings in the CACFP</i>. Effective October 1, 2021, the required amounts for the grains component change to ounce equivalents. For more information, see the CSDE’s handout, <i>Grain Ounce Equivalents for the CACFP</i>.</p>	

OVS in At-Risk Afterschool Centers in the CACFP

Lunches and suppers in at-risk afterschool centers must meet the criteria below to be reimbursable under OVS.

- Each lunch and supper must include the **full serving** (the required amount in the CACFP meal pattern) of the five lunch/supper components. For information on the CACFP meal patterns, see the CSDE's [Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- Larger servings of the **same** component count as only one food item. For example, 1 cup of broccoli counts as only one food component (vegetables). Two 1-ounce slices of whole-grain bread (two servings) count as only one food component (grains).
- If the menu offers the full serving of a component as two **separate** food items, participants must take **both** items to credit as one component for OVS. For example, the lunch meal pattern requires $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables. If the lunch menu offers $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of broccoli and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of corn, children must select both servings to count as the full vegetables component. The lunch/supper meal pattern requires one serving of the grains component. If the menu offers $\frac{1}{2}$ serving of brown rice and $\frac{1}{2}$ serving of whole-wheat roll, children must select both to count as the full grains component.
- Amounts **less** than the full serving do not count as a food component for OVS. For example, a selection of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of broccoli does not count as the vegetables component.
- Children may decline any one or two food components, including milk.
- If a combination food contains three or more food components and the menu offers only five food components, children cannot decline the combination food. For example, a menu offers spinach lasagna made with cheese (meat/meat alternates), lasagna noodles (grains), spinach and tomato sauce (vegetables), apple (fruits), and milk (milk). Children must select the lasagna (three components) for a reimbursable meal.

Examples of OVS at lunch and supper

Tables 5 and 6 show examples of OVS at lunch/supper for ages 6-18 in at-risk afterschool centers.



OVS in At-Risk Afterschool Centers in the CACFP

Table 5. Sample lunch/supper menu 1

CACFP meal pattern	Planned menu	Meal pattern contribution
Meat/meat alternates (MMA) 2 ounces	Turkey, 2 ounces	2 ounces MMA
Grains (G), 1 serving	Whole-wheat bread, 2 ounces	2 servings G
Vegetables (V), ½ cup	Broccoli florets, ½ cup, with low-fat yogurt dip	½ cup V
Fruits (F), ¼ cup	Cantaloupe slices, ¼ cup	¼ cup F
Milk (M), 8 fluid ounces ¹	Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk, 1 cup	1 cup M

Children must select the minimum serving at least three of the five offered food components

Child selects	Food items	Food components (minimum daily serving)	Reimbursable meal?
Turkey sandwich (MMA, G)	1	2	No. The selected meal contains only two full components (MMA and G). Two servings of the same food (two slices of bread) count as only one food component.
Turkey sandwich (MMA, G) Milk (M)	2	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three full components (MMA, G, and M).
Turkey sandwich (MMA, G) Cantaloupe slices (F)	2	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three full components (MMA, G, and F).
Turkey sandwich (MMA, G) Broccoli florets (V)	2	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three full components (MMA, G, and V).
Broccoli florets (V) Cantaloupe slices (F) Milk (M)	3	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three full components (V, F, and M).
Turkey sandwich (MMA, G) Broccoli florets (V) Milk (M)	3	4	Yes. The selected meal contains four full components (MMA, G, V, and M).

OVS in At-Risk Afterschool Centers in the CACFP

Table 5. Sample lunch/supper menu 1, *continued*

Children must select the minimum serving at least three of the five offered food components			
Child selects	Food items	Food components (minimum daily serving)	Reimbursable meal?
Turkey sandwich (MMA, G) Cantaloupe slices (F) Milk (M)	3	4	Yes. The selected meal contains four full components (MMA, G, F, and M).
<p>¹ Milk must be unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free. Flavored fat-free milk may be served to ages 6 and older, but the USDA's <i>CACFP Best Practices</i> recommends only unflavored milk.</p>			

Table 6. Sample lunch/supper menu 2

CACFP meal pattern	Planned menu	Meal pattern contribution	
Meat/meat alternates (MMA) 2 ounces	Meat sauce, 2 ounces of cooked hamburger	2 ounces MMA	
Grains (G), 1 serving	Spaghetti, 1 cup	2 servings G	
Vegetables (V), ½ cup	Tossed garden salad, 1 cup ² Tomato sauce in meat sauce, ¼ cup	¾ cup V	
Fruits (F), ¼ cup	Fruit salad, ½ cup	½ cup F	
Milk (M), 8 fluid ounces ¹	Unflavored low-fat (1%) milk, 1 cup	1 cup M	
Children must select the minimum serving at least three of the five offered food components			
Child selects	Food items	Food components (minimum daily serving)	Reimbursable meal?
Spaghetti (G) Meat sauce (MMA)	2	2	No. The selected meal contains only two components (G and MMA). Two servings of the same food (1 cup of spaghetti) count as only one food component.

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Table 6. Sample lunch/supper menu 2, *continued*

Children must select the minimum serving at least three of the five offered food components

Child selects	Food items	Food components (minimum daily serving)	Reimbursable meal?
Spaghetti (G) Fruit salad (F) Milk (M)	3	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three full components (G, F, and M).
Salad (V) Fruit salad (F) Milk (M)	3	3	Yes. The selected meal contains two full components (V, F, and M).
Spaghetti (G) Meat sauce (MMA) Milk (M)	3	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three full components (G, MMA, and M). The ¼ cup of tomato sauce in the meat sauce does not count as a component for OVS because it is less than the minimum serving.
Spaghetti (G) Meat sauce (MMA) Fruit salad (F)	3	3	Yes. The selected meal contains two full components (G, MMA, and F).
Salad (V) Fruit salad (F) Milk (M)	3	3	Yes. The selected meal contains three full components (V, F, and M).

¹ Milk must be unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free. Flavored fat-free milk may be served to ages 6 and older, but the USDA's *CACFP Best Practices* recommends only unflavored milk.

² Raw leafy greens such as spinach and lettuce credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup of lettuce credits as ½ cup of the vegetables component.

OVS in At-Risk Afterschool Centers in the CACFP

Resources

CACFP Best Practices (USDA):

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP_factBP.pdf

Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

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

Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/NPGmp.pdf>

Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/CACFPmealpattern.pdf>

Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Offer Versus Serve in the CACFP (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/tn/CACFPOfferVersusServe.pdf>

USDA Final Rule (81 FR 24347): CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/fr-042516>

USDA Final Rule Corrections (81 FR 75671): Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/11/01/2016-26339/child-and-adult-care-food-program-meal-pattern-revisions-related-to-the-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>

USDA Memo CACFP 05-2017: Offer Versus Serve and Family Style Meals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/offer-versus-serve-and-family-style-meals-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

OVS in At-Risk Afterschool Centers in the CACFP



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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Adult Day Care Centers](#) webpages, or contact the [CACFP staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This handout is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/AtRisk/OVSAtRisk.pdf>.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
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- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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