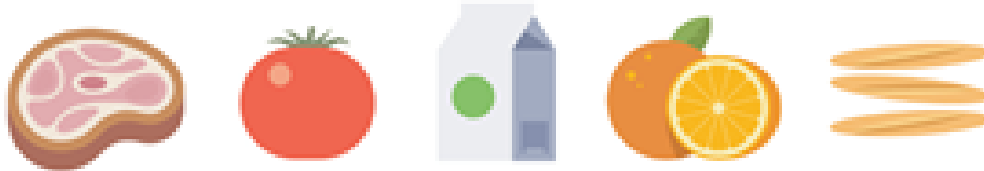




The ABC's of Meal Counting

Refresh.



Refocus.

School Nutrition Programs
Back to School Conference



Purpose of this Training

To provide guidance for successful implementation of the following:

- Eligibility Documentation
- Benefit Issuance
- Meal Patterns
- Offer vs Serve
- Collection Procedures
- Overt Identification
- Meal Counting Procedures
- Point of Service Procedures (POS)





Eligibility Documentation

The SFA must have documentation to claim free and/or reduced-price meals for reimbursement. Documentation can be:

- Household Eligibility Application (HEA)
- Direct Certification (DC) documentation
- Foster Child documentation
- Homeless, Migrant, and/or Runaway liaison documentation
- Head Start/Even Start documentation (Master List)
- RCCI documentation (Master List)

For Eligibility guidance refer to: [SNP Administrative Handbook \(Section G\)](#).



Benefit Issuance

- Benefit Issuance is created utilizing approved eligibility documentation to communicate each student's approved category (Free, Reduced-Price, or Paid) to the meal counting method utilized at the Point of Service (POS).
- Benefit Issuance must be updated whenever a student's approved category changes.

Examples of systems used to accurately count meals based on benefit issuance documentation:

- Student ID cards
- Key/Pin Pad
- Bar Code Cards
- Student Tickets
- Student Rosters
- Biometrics



Breakfast Meal Pattern





Food Component versus Food Item

- **Food Component:** A food component is one of three food groups that comprise a reimbursable breakfast. The three food components are: ***fruits (or vegetables as substitute)***; ***grains (with optional meats/meat alternates)***; and ***fluid milk***. Schools must always offer all three food components in at least the minimum daily required quantities.
- **Food Item:** A specific food offered within the three food components.



What Credits as a Food Item?

Components	1 <i>Item</i> Equals
Fruit	Portion sizes may vary as determined by menu planner (minimum 1/8 cup)
Grains	1 oz eq
Fluid Milk	1 cup (1/2 pt.)

Fruit Item: School menu planners must offer at least 1 cup fruit daily by offering one or more food items in various portion sizes. ***Minimum 1/2 cup fruit must be selected for offer versus serve.

Grain Item: One item of grain equals 1 oz grain equivalent; however, schools may plan to offer larger grain components, such as a 2 oz grain equivalent muffin or bagel, which would credit as two items.

Fluid Milk: One item of milk is 1 cup (1/2 pt.).



Examples of Food Items

Credits as 1 Item	Credits as 2 Items
1 Cup Milk (½ pt.)	3 oz. Biscuit
¼ cup Fruit	3.2 oz. Cereal Bar
4 oz. 100% Fruit Juice	2.7 oz. Waffles
4 oz. Yogurt	2 Slices of Bread
1 oz. Cold Cereal	2 oz. Bagel
1 oz. Cheese Stick	3 oz. Muffin
½ cup Fruit	1 Large Egg

*****Nutrition documentation such as Child Nutrition (CN) labels and/or Product Formulation Statements (PFS) must be obtained to determine correct crediting amounts.***



Breakfast Entrees with a Combination of Components

Examples:

- Biscuit (credits to 1 oz. grain) and Sausage (credits to 1 oz. meat/meat alternate) sandwich = 2 grain items
- Yogurt (credits to 1 oz. meat/meat alternate) and Berry (1/2 cup fruit) Parfait = 1 grain item & 1 fruit item
- Pancake (credits to 1 oz. grain) wrapped Sausage (credits to 1 oz. meat/meat alternate) on a stick = 2 grain items

*****Nutrition documentation such as Child Nutrition (CN) labels and/or Product Formulation Statements (PFS) must be obtained to determine correct crediting amounts.***



Breakfast Meal Pattern

Component	K-5	6-8	9-12
Fruit (cups)	(1) 5	(1) 5	(1) 5
Grains (oz. eq)	(1) 7	(1) 8	(1) 9
Fluid Milk (cups)	(1) 5	(1) 5	(1) 5

- The daily required minimum serving sizes are listed in parenthesis and the weekly minimum serving sizes are listed outside the parenthesis.
- Breakfast Requirements Allow for One Menu Plan for All Grades (K-12)

Optional: Meat/Meat alternate 1 oz = 1 oz equivalent Grain.

- *A grain must be offered prior to a meat/meat alternate to credit as a grain.*



Serve Only for Breakfast

- Is optional for all grade levels.
- Students must be served all three components at the required daily minimums.
- All components can be pre-bagged or served individually on the serving line.
- Point of Service (POS) meal counts must be at the end of the serving line to ensure all components are received for a reimbursable breakfast.

Three Components must be Served:

1) 1 oz. grain equivalent

2) 1 cup fruit *(Portion sizes may vary based on menu planning but must equal at least 1 cup)*

3) 1 cup fluid milk



Offer versus Serve (OVS) for Breakfast

- Is optional for all grade levels.
- Students must be offered all three components at the required daily minimums.
- At least 4 food items must be offered from the 3 required food components.
- Student must select at least 3 food items which must include at least a ½ cup fruit and/or vegetable.
- Point of Service (POS) meal counts must be at the end of the serving line to ensure all components are received for a reimbursable breakfast.

Four food items must be offered:

- 1) 1 oz. grain equivalent
- 2) Fruit (*Portion sizes may vary based on menu planning - minimum 1/8 cup*)
- 3) 1 cup fluid milk
- 4) A grain, meat/meat alternate, fruit, or vegetable



Reimbursable Breakfast (K-5, 6-8, 9-12, and K-12):

At least 3 food items were selected with one a ½ cup fruit.





Reimbursable Breakfast (K-5, 6-8, 9-12, and K-12):

At least 3 food items were selected with one a ½ cup fruit.





Non-Reimbursable Breakfast (K-5, 6-8, 9-12, and K-12):

A ½ cup of fruit was not selected.





Non-Reimbursable Breakfast (K-5, 6-8, 9-12, and K-12):

Only 2 food items were selected, a ½ cup fruit (4 oz. 100% Juice) and a 1 oz. cereal bowl.





Offer versus Serve Pre-Bagged Meals

OVS Breakfast Pre-Bagged Meals

- Should attempt to the extent possible to offer choices (such as a fruit basket) aside from the pre-bagged items
- There is no requirement that all possible combinations of choices be made available to the student





Example of Breakfast Offer vs Serve Signage

What Makes a School Breakfast



grain



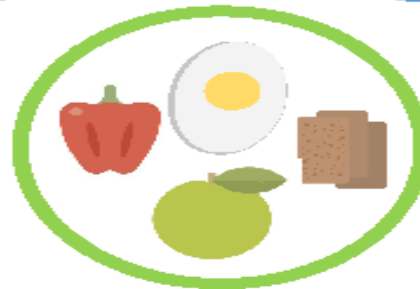
fruit (or vegetable)



milk

Offer Vs. Serve

Choose at least 3 items from the four offered, **One must be** a 1/2 cup of **fruit** (or **vegetable**).



The fourth item offered may be another grain, another fruit or veggie, or a meat or meat alternate.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Lunch Meal Pattern





Lunch Meal Pattern

Components	K-5	6-8	9-12
Fruit (cups)	($\frac{1}{2}$) 2 $\frac{1}{2}$	($\frac{1}{2}$) 2 $\frac{1}{2}$	(1) 5
Vegetable (cups)	($\frac{3}{4}$) 3 $\frac{3}{4}$	($\frac{3}{4}$) 3 $\frac{3}{4}$	(1) 5
Grains (oz. eq)	(1) 8	(1) 8	(2) 10
Meat/Meat Alternate (oz. eq)	(1) 8	(1) 9	(2) 10
Fluid Milk (cups)	(1)	(1)	(1)

- The required daily minimum serving sizes are listed in parenthesis and the weekly minimum serving sizes are listed outside the parenthesis.



Lunch Offer vs Serve/Serve Only

- **Offer vs Serve:** For a reimbursable meal, students must select at least 3 of the 5 required components with one of the components a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit or vegetable. The other two components must at least equal the required daily minimum.
- **Serve Only:** Students must be served all 5 components at the required daily minimum portion size without the option of declining any of the 5 components.
- **Schools with grades K-5, 6-8, or K-8:** Have the option of being Serve Only or Offer vs Serve.
- **Schools with grades 9-12:** Are required to implement Offer vs Serve for **Lunch Only**.

5 Components must be offered at the required grade level serving size

1) Fruit

2) Vegetable

3) Grain

4) Meat/Meat Alternate

5) Fluid Milk



Reimbursable Lunch (K-5, 6-8, K-8 and 9-12):

At least 2 full components and ½ cup fruit were selected. In this example, the milk, the bun, and the chicken patty are full components.

Lunch Offer vs Serve





Non-Reimbursable Lunch (K-5, 6-8, K-8 and 9-12):

A ½ cup fruit and/or vegetable was not selected.

Lunch Offer vs Serve

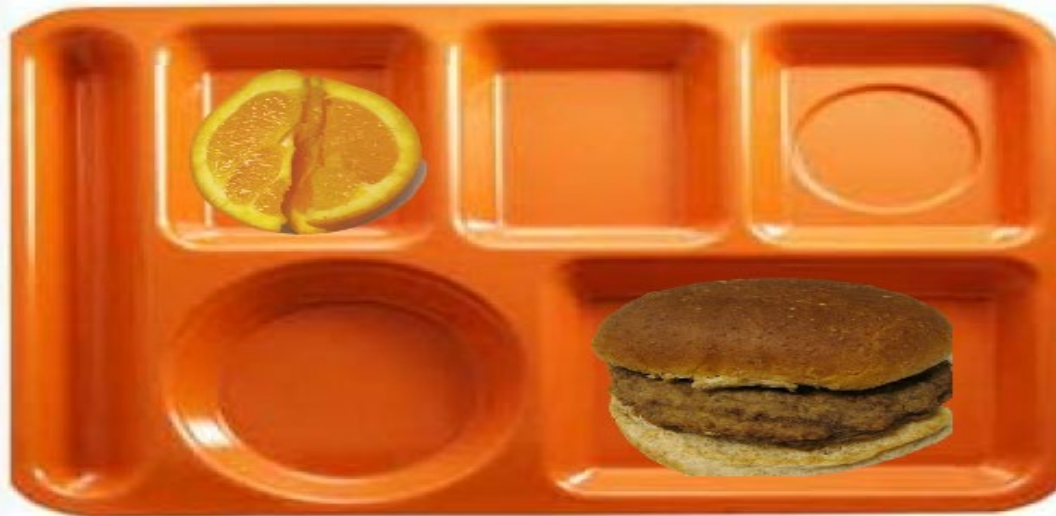




Reimbursable Lunch (K-5, 6-8, K-8 and 9-12):

At least 2 full components and ½ cup fruit were selected. In this example the bun and the chicken patty are full components.

Lunch Offer vs Serve





Reimbursable Lunch:

- K-8:** *Could be a reimbursable lunch if the 2 full components were a ½ cup orange and 1 cup fluid milk (½ pt.) with a ½ cup broccoli.*
- 9-12:** *Could be a reimbursable lunch if the 2 full components were 1 cup broccoli and 1 cup fluid milk (½ pt.) with a ½ cup orange.*

Lunch Offer vs Serve





Identifying Reimbursable Meals under OVS (Signage, Menus, and Training)

- Signage and menus should provide clear information about allowable choices. This will help students easily build a reimbursable meal and is especially important to avoid problems at the point of service.
 - ✓ **MENU SIGNAGE (REIMBURSABLE MEAL OPTIONS):** Students, servers and cashiers must be able to identify what constitutes a reimbursable meal. The NSLP regulation at 7 CFR 210.10(a)(2) requires that schools identify, near or at the beginning of serving lines, what foods constitutes a reimbursable meal.
 - ✓ **OFFER VERSUS SERVE SIGNAGE:** Schools implementing OVS must also identify what a student must select to have a reimbursable meal under OVS.
 - ✓ Signage is not required for field trips, breakfast in the classroom and other venues where signage may be problematic.
- Schools are expected to conduct training for cashiers and serving line staff so they can help students select the required food components/food items in the quantities needed for reimbursable lunches and breakfasts. Annual training is required to meet the professional standards requirements.



Overt Identification

- The SFA must prevent overt identification at the POS to ensure each students' eligibility for free or reduced-price meals is confidential.
- **Allowable Codes:**
 - ✓ *Number Series:* 1000–1999 (Free), 2000–2999 (Reduced), and 3000–3999 (Paid).
 - ✓ *Number of Digits:* Vary the length of coded numbers by category: Four-digits (Free), five-digits (Reduced), and six-digits (Paid).
 - ✓ *Variations:* Vary the style of the students' enrollment dates: 10/2/16 (Free), 10-2-16 (Reduced), and 10.2.16 (Paid).
 - ✓ *Coded Roster:* If a more efficient method is not available, a roster can be coded using any of the methods listed above to take the meal count at the POS.
- **Unallowable Codes by the USDA:**
 - ✓ The words Free, Reduced, and Paid or "F", "R", "P".
 - ✓ Single symbols such as A, B, C, 1, 2, 3 or AAA, BBB, CCC.



Point of Service (POS)

- Daily meal counts must be taken by a **trained** food service staff member at that end of the food service line where it can be determined that a reimbursable meal, containing all required components at the correct portion sizes, has been served to an eligible student.
- When meals are served on a field trip or in a room other than the cafeteria, such as a classroom, meal counts must be taken at the POS **after** all the required components are offered ensuring a reimbursable meal is selected by each student. **Meal counts cannot be based on a morning count, a pre-order count, or the number of meals sent and/or left-over.**



Steps for a Successful Point of Service (POS)

- 1) All reimbursable meal choices offered must contain the required components that meet the daily minimum requirements.
- 2) Each reimbursable meal must be evaluated at the POS to ensure the meal contains the required number of components prior to being counted.
- 3) All meals must be counted utilizing an acceptable meal counting system.



Acceptable Meal Counting Methods

- **Student ID cards:** Each student's ID card is scanned at the electronic meal count system, located at the end of the serving line, by either the student or cashier after determining the meal is reimbursable.
- **Key/Pin Pad:** Each student enters their assigned number code into the Key/Pin Pad at the electronic meal count system, located at the end of the serving line, after determining the meal is reimbursable.
- **Bar Codes:** Bar codes for each student are scanned by the cashier at the electronic meal count system, located at the end of the serving line, after determining the meal is reimbursable.
- **Student Coded Tickets:** Collected at the POS and either manually counted or entered in an electronic meal count system.
- **Student Rosters:** A staff member checks off the student's name.



Point of Service (POS) Best Practices

- A daily pre-service meeting with all serving and POS staff to discuss the meal options and what constitutes a reimbursable meal at the POS.
- Utilize staff members to limit the number of students allowed in the serving line/area at one time for a more efficient POS meal count.
- Utilize stanchions to control the flow and create a single file serving line directing students to the POS without the ability to exit the serving line.
- Additional components should be available to offer at the POS to assist staff members when student selections do not meet a reimbursable meal.
- For both breakfast and lunch, offer fruit and/or vegetable servings in 1/2c portions for Offer vs Serve.
- If meals need to be consumed at an alternate location, students should receive their meals in the cafeteria, counted at the POS, and then taken to the alternate locations (classrooms, administrative offices, etc.).
 - ✓ If students are unable to receive their meals in the cafeteria, then meals must be delivered by trained staff members and an accurate POS count taken after each child receives a reimbursable meal.



Unacceptable Meal Counting Methods

- Counts taken anywhere other than at the POS (beginning of line).
- A back-out system, subtracting left-overs minus the number of meals prepared, to obtain a final meal count.
- Attendance/morning counts.
- Tray counts.
- Meals delivered.
- Entrees prepared.
- Number of meals paid for in-advance.
- The number of free and reduced-price eligible students.
- Visual identification of students with no backup system available.
- Number of tickets sold and distributed.
- A system of converting cash meals.



SFA's Policy on Outstanding School Food Service Balances

- Policies on outstanding school food service balances are set at the school district level and must adhere to USDA regulations.
- Must have a written and clearly communicated meal charge policy to ensure a consistent and transparent approach. This policy must be communicated in writing to all households at the start of each school year and to households that transfer into the school district during the school year.
- Students eligible for FREE, REDUCED-PRICE and PAID meals must be provided a meal regardless of money owed on à la carte items, second meals purchased, or meal charges accrued prior to certification.
- A child eligible for FREE meals must be offered the **same** reimbursable meal options as all other eligible children regardless of their debt.
- The purchasing of à la carte items on an account which owes money should be handled according to the SFA-level policy.
- Any collection procedures or resources available to the SFA may be used for the collection of debt, including collection agencies. Collection efforts should be directed at the legal guardians that are responsible for providing funds for meal purchases.



Wrap Up

- Ensure all students are accurately categorized to be claimed as Free, Reduced or Paid.
- Ensure all meal components are offered in the correct serving sizes.
- Ensure all staff are trained to recognize a reimbursable meal. (Serve Only or Offer vs Serve)
- Ensure a system is in place to obtain an accurate meal count at Point of Service.



thank
you!