

# Food Service Facts

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## 4. Meal Service Policies

### Equal Access for All Students

When a school offers more than one type of reimbursable meal or when a variety of food and milk choices are offered, all children must be offered the same selections regardless of whether the students are eligible for paid, reduced price or free meals. If certain items are not made available to all students, those items may not be counted toward the reimbursable meal.

Reimbursable meals can be served as a part of special functions such as holiday celebrations, “reward” parties, field trips, etc. The sponsor must ensure that:

- ◆ Students are not denied meals as a disciplinary action.
- ◆ Students are not overtly identified by eligibility category.
- ◆ Meals meet program requirements.

### Meals Cannot Be Denied As Disciplinary Action

Federal regulations prohibit sponsors from denying a meal or any part of a meal to a student as a disciplinary action. This applies regardless of the student’s eligibility category.

Students being disciplined may be seated at a separate table or served in a different location. They must be offered a reimbursable meal that provides the same quantity and quality of food available to other students. It is permissible to serve a complete reimbursable meal (rather than offer choices) to a student being disciplined.

### Exchange of Food by Students

The exchange of food by students is not prohibited by law, but is discouraged for health and sanitation reasons. Implementing the “Offer” option of the “Offer or Serve” provision may help eliminate some of the motivation for students to exchange food.

### Adults Eating Food Intended for Students

Adults may NOT eat foods from the reimbursable meals served to students. In addition, adults may NOT take any foods for their own consumption that were previously served to students, even if the students do not plan to eat or drink the food item(s). For example, an adult should not take unopened milk (that was not consumed by students) from a “share table”.

**Policies Related to In-School Suspension (ISS)**

**Q-1** *Is the sponsor required to offer a reimbursable lunch to students in a disciplinary setting such as In-School Suspension (ISS)?*

**A** If the site participates in the National School Lunch Program, students in ISS must be offered a reimbursable school lunch. This applies to ISS sites located off campus as well as ISS sites located in the school building.



**Q-2** *Is the school required to provide breakfast for students in ISS?*

**A** Kansas public schools must offer breakfast in all school buildings operated or used for pupil attendance purposes by the board of education unless a School Breakfast Program waiver has been granted. If the ISS location does not have food service available, the sponsor is still required to provide breakfast.



**Q-3** *May students in ISS units be provided a lunch that is different than the meal served to students in the cafeteria?*

**A** Yes, but it must meet all meal pattern requirements if it is to be claimed for reimbursement.



**Q-4** *May students in an ISS unit be required to eat in a different location or at a different time from other students?*

**A** Yes, as long as the meal meets meal pattern requirements and is served during the school's regular meal times.



## Meal Times

National School Lunch Program regulations specify regular meal times as occurring between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM.

School Breakfast Program regulations require breakfast to be served in the morning hours, at (or close to) the beginning of the students' day at school. Middle, junior and senior high schools can alter the serving time for school breakfast with approval from Child Nutrition & Wellness, KSDE. Schools may begin serving no later than after the first hour of class instruction.

## Allow Adequate Time to Eat

While it is the responsibility of each sponsor to determine the length of its meal periods, KSDE has established the following guidelines.

1. Organize the serving line(s) to move students through as quickly as possible.
2. Stagger serving periods to minimize waiting time.
3. Monitor the time it takes for students to be served from the time they begin waiting in line until they are seated at the table.
4. Provide students adequate time to eat.

**Lunch:** Allow a minimum of 15 minutes from the time a student receives a lunch until he/she is required to leave the food service area. KSDE recommends allowing at least 25 minutes for students to get lunch, eat and pass to class.

**Breakfast:** Allow a minimum of 10 minutes from the time a student receives a breakfast until he/she is required to leave the food service area. KSDE recommends allowing at least 20 minutes for students to get breakfast, eat and pass to class. The amount of time required can be reduced slightly if students are permitted to eat breakfast in the classroom.

5. Allow students 1-2 minutes to clean up and prepare to return to the classroom or go to the playground.

## School Prepared Sack Lunches

Reimbursable lunches are to be served and consumed as part of the school day, on either school premises or at a school-related location. School meals given to children to take home are not reimbursable. However, meals such as those taken on a school-supervised field trip, may be reimbursed if the field trip is part of the school day.

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In order for sack lunches to qualify for reimbursement, the sponsor must assure that each of the following criteria are met:

1. The sack lunch must meet meal pattern requirements.
  - ◆ For schools using the Food Based menu planning option, the menu must include the meat/meat alternate, two (2) sources of fruits and/or vegetables, grain/bread and milk. All items must be included in the served meal. The portions must meet the component requirements for the age/grade group being served.
  - ◆ For schools using the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) option, the meal must contain an entrée, milk and at least one other food item. All items must be included in the served meal. The sack lunch menu must be included in the nutrient analysis for the age/grade group.
2. The sack lunch meal must be recorded on the food production record.
  - ◆ Food Based production records must include the component information for the sack lunch, the number of meals prepared, and the number served to students and adults.
  - ◆ NSMP production records must include the number of sack lunches planned and served to students and adults.
3. Point-of-service accountability must be used for sack lunch meals. A roster must be checked as students are served the sack lunch. The roster is returned to the lunch accountability staff person following the service of the meal. Based on the checked roster, the number of sack lunches served is added to the school's lunch counts for the day.
4. Foods of minimal nutritional value may NOT be served as part of the sack lunch. Foods of minimal nutritional value, as defined by USDA regulations, include carbonated soft drinks, water ices, chewing gum and certain candies. Refer to Chapter 20 of *Food Service Facts* for more information on foods of minimal nutritional value.
5. Good sanitation practices must be followed. All potentially hazardous foods must be held in ice chests and ice must surround those foods. With the exception of milk, it is recommended that the number of potentially hazardous foods be limited when planning the sack lunch menu.
6. The sack lunches must be served between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM.

### Examples of Reimbursable Sack Lunch Menus

Peanut Butter Sandwich  
(Jelly in individual portion package)  
Chips  
Pre-portioned Juice  
Whole Banana  
Cookie  
Milk\*

Ham and Cheese Sandwich\*  
(Mayonnaise and mustard in individual portion package)  
Chips  
Carrot and Celery Sticks  
Whole Apple  
Cookie  
Milk\*

\*Potentially Hazardous Food

## Family Style Meal Service

As the name implies, family style meal service is a method of serving food to groups of students with adult supervision. Supervision is a key to the success of family style meal service. Under the guidance of the adult, students are encouraged to try new foods, make selections that eliminate excessive waste, demonstrate appropriate behaviors, and share attention and conversation at the table.

Prior to starting family style dining, the sponsor should determine if it is a viable option for the school by evaluating:

- ◆ Expenses for extra serving dishes, utensils and additional dishwashing
- ◆ Possible increases in food costs
- ◆ Storage space to determine if it is adequate to hold additional serving pieces

If the decision is made to proceed with implementing family style service, then the sponsor should:

- ◆ Train teachers, staff, parents and students on proper hand washing, food handling and meal accountability.
- ◆ Develop an ongoing plan for input from staff, parents and students.
- ◆ Establish ongoing food safety procedures in collaboration with local health sanitarians. Refer to Chapter 22 of *Food Service Facts* for specific suggestions on keeping food safe when using family style service.
- ◆ Contact KSDE for technical assistance and to assure adequate meal accountability procedures are developed.

## Procedures for Family Style Meals

During family style meal service, use the following procedures to assure food safety and that reimbursable meals are served.

- ◆ If the adult serves the food, the students must be given the opportunity to decline menu items in an “Offer” program and must be served all menu items in a “Serve” program.
- ◆ Appropriate serving containers and utensils must be provided.
- ◆ Each serving bowl/platter must contain enough food to allow every person at the table to have a full portion of the menu item. After all students at the table have been served, leftover food may be offered as “seconds” at that table only. Food that has been on dining tables **cannot** be served at other meals or offered to students at other tables.

### **Meal Accountability in Family Style Meal Service**

- ◆ An adult at each table must be able to identify a reimbursable meal.
- ◆ Each day an adult must account for the students who ate a reimbursable meal at each table. This can be accomplished by completing a roster or collecting meal tickets.

### **Using the “Offer” Provision in Family Style Meal Service**

- ◆ Each adult must understand the meal components of a reimbursable meal and the appropriate portion sizes for each component.
- ◆ It is the student’s choice to decline foods in an “Offer” program. No student can be required to make certain selections except when the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) option is used. Under NSMP, students must take the entrée. Refer to Chapter 17 of *Food Service Facts* concerning the “Offer or Serve” requirements for the Food Based Menu Planning option and to Chapter 18 of *Food Service Facts* concerning the “Offer or Serve” requirements for the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning option.
- ◆ The adult must assure that no student takes such a large portion of the food provided that others are unable to receive the minimum required for a reimbursable meal.
- ◆ The menu options should be clearly explained to the students each day.