

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 vs 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 and be documented on the production record 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. For schools electing to offer breakfast via an innovative breakfast delivery model the amount of time required can be reduced if students are permitted to eat in the classroom or other common areas.

Note: Sponsors are encouraged to adopt policy allowing longer meal times.

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.

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 minimum daily meal pattern requirements. The menu must include the meat/meat alternate, fruit, vegetable, 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.**
2. The sack lunch meal must be recorded on the food production record. Production records must include the component information for the sack lunch, the number of meals prepared, and the number 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. Good sanitation practices must be followed. All Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods must be held at or below 41° F. With the exception of milk, it is recommended that the number of TCS foods be limited when planning the sack lunch menu.
5. The sack lunches must be served between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM.

Examples of Reimbursable Sack Lunch Menus

Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich
(Jelly in individual portion package)
Whole Grain-Rich Chips
Broccoli Bites
Whole Banana
String Cheese
1.3-1.5 oz pkg of Raisins
Low Fat or Skim Milk*

Ham and Cheese Sandwich* or Wrap
(Mayonnaise and mustard in individual portion package)
Whole Grain-Rich Chips
Carrot and Celery Sticks
Whole Apple
Low Fat or Skim Milk*

*TCS Food

Family Style Meal Service

A school or RCCI may serve meals “family style”. Family style meal service allows students to serve themselves from common dishes of food with assistance from supervising adults. While family style meal service allows students to make choices in selecting foods, the supervising adult should initially offer the full planned serving of each food component/food item to each student. Over the week, offered meals must meet all of the daily and weekly food component/food item requirements, and the weekly dietary specifications. However, since replenishment is immediately available at each table, the initial serving of a food component/food item may be less than the full required minimum quantity.

The supervising adult should encourage additional portions and selections to meet the full required minimum serving size as appropriate, provided dietary specifications are not exceeded. Because of the OVS requirement for the NSLP and the SBP that each student select at least ½ cup of a fruit or vegetable or a combination of both during the course of a 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.

For additional information on family style meals, please refer to Policy Memorandum SP 35-2011, CACFP 23-2011 “Clarification on the Use of Offer Versus Serve and Family Style” dated May 17, 2011 which is applicable to the NSLP, the SBP, and the CACFP.

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 vs Serve” 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 vs Serve” program. No student can be required to make certain selections. Refer to the **USDA OVS Handbook** at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP41-2015av2.pdf> concerning the “Offer vs Serve” requirements.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Family style meal service offers sponsors flexibility in the initial serving sizes of the food placed on the table. However, sponsors must use this flexibility while following these practices:
 - Enough food must be prepared and placed on each table to allow for the minimum portion size of all required meal components for all children at the table.
 - The adult supervisor must ensure that each student selects at least ½ cup of fruit or vegetable or a combination of both plus a portion of 2 other components during the course of a family style meal service to ensure the meal is reimbursable.
 - The minimum regulatory portion must be offered to the child.
 - When a child does not initially take the full portion required by regulations, adult staff are responsible for actively encouraging the child to take the full portion size during the course of the meal.