



Food and
Nutrition
Service

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Center

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SUBJECT: Offer Versus Serve and Family Style Meals in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Child Nutrition Programs
All States

This memorandum outlines the use of offer versus serve (OVS) in the adult day care and at-risk afterschool settings in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the use of family style meals in the CACFP. This memorandum includes clarification on the differences between OVS and family style meal service and contains frequently asked questions and answers in the Attachment. In addition, this memorandum supersedes SP 35-2011, CACFP 23-2011, *Clarification on the Use of Offer vs. Serve and Family Style Meal Service*, as it relates to the CACFP. SP 35-2011 remains in effect for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) until further guidance is issued. In addition, this memorandum supersedes FNS Instruction 783-9, Rev. 2, *Family Style Meal Service in the Child and Adult Care Food Program*; Instruction 783-9 has been rescinded.

Background

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Public Law 111-296, amended section 17 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA), 42 U.S.C. 1766, to require the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to update the CACFP meal pattern requirements to make them more consistent with (a) the most recent version of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, (b) the most recent relevant nutrition science and (c) appropriate authoritative scientific agency and organization recommendations. On April 25, 2016 USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published the final rule "Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act" (81 FR 24348) to update the CACFP meal patterns in 7 CFR 226.20.

The CACFP regulations allow OVS in adult day care centers and the final rule extended the option to use OVS to at-risk afterschool programs (7 CFR 226.20(o)) starting October 1, 2017. Extending this allowance to at-risk afterschool programs provides menu planners another option for meal service and improves consistency across Child Nutrition Programs as OVS is already established in the NSLP, SBP and

the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This memorandum explains the requirements an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program must follow when serving OVS meals in order to receive reimbursement.

In addition, the final rule added the family style meal service requirements that were outlined in FNS Instruction 783-9, Rev. 2 to the CACFP regulations under 7 CFR 226.20(n). This memorandum explains the requirements centers or day care homes must follow when serving meals family style in order to receive reimbursement.

I. OFFER VERSUS SERVE

Overview

OVS is an approach to menu planning and meal service that allows participants to decline some of the food offered in a reimbursable breakfast, lunch or supper. Children and adults who are offered food choices are more likely to eat the foods they enjoy rather than throw the food away. OVS is only allowed in CACFP adult day care and CACFP at-risk afterschool settings for breakfast, lunch and supper meals. OVS is not allowed at snack. OVS may not be implemented at snack because there are only two required components and, therefore, there is not enough food offered to allow a child or adult to decline some foods and ensure that the snack the child or adult takes is nutritionally sufficient. Using OVS can help adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs reduce food waste and costs while maintaining the nutritional value of the meal that is served.

In general, OVS is not considered to be appropriate for younger children because it may interfere with the CACFP's nutrition goals and the center's or day care home's efforts to introduce new foods to children while they are young and still developing food preferences. Therefore, OVS is only an available meal service option for the CACFP adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs.

Using OVS is optional. Adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs are not required to implement OVS. Sponsors or independent centers that choose to use OVS must notify their State agency. How sponsors and independent centers must notify their State agency is up to the State agency. If a sponsor or independent center chooses to use OVS, menu planners should examine participation and food selection trends to determine what and how much food to prepare. This process results in cost savings through minimizing food waste.

Please note that State agencies cannot institute a statewide ban on OVS. However, specific sponsors or independent centers may be restricted from using the option on a case-by-case basis, such as through a corrective action, if the State agency determines that the sponsor or independent center is unable to implement OVS within the requirements outlined in this memorandum.

Terms to Know

For any meal to be eligible for reimbursement, no matter what meal service type is used, all food components in the required minimum serving sizes must be offered. Before using OVS, there are several terms adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool program operators should know:

- A food component is one of the food categories that comprise a reimbursable meal. CACFP centers and day care homes must always offer all the food components that comprise a reimbursable meal in at least the minimum required amounts. The food components in the CACFP are: grains, vegetables, fruits, meat/meat alternates and milk.
- A food item is a specific food offered within the food components comprising the reimbursable meal. For example, separate ½ cup servings of broccoli and carrots are two food items that comprise the vegetable component.
- A combination food contains more than one food item from different food components that cannot be separated, such as a vegetable pizza. A vegetable pizza contains three food items from three different food components: a serving of grains (crust), a serving of vegetables (vegetable toppings), and a serving of meat alternate (cheese). Other examples of combination foods are soups, prepared sandwiches and burritos.

CACFP OVS Requirements

The CACFP OVS requirements support the practice of offering a variety of food choices for children and adults, increase the likelihood that children and adults will select foods they prefer, reduce waste, and ensure children and adults are receiving enough food to meet their nutritional needs. All sponsors and independent centers electing to use OVS in the adult day care and at-risk afterschool settings of the CACFP are required to follow the CACFP OVS requirements. Due to the distinguishing nature of the CACFP from the NSLP, SBP and SFSP, including variations in settings and resources, the OVS requirements in the adult day care and at-risk afterschool settings of the CACFP are slightly different from the OVS requirements in NSLP, SBP and SFSP. The OVS requirements in the CACFP are as follows:

OVS at Breakfast

The CACFP breakfast meal pattern requires three food components to be offered: milk, fruits and vegetables, and grains. As a reminder, fruit and vegetables are one combined component in the breakfast meal patterns.

When using OVS at breakfast, at least the following four food items, in the required minimum serving sizes, must be offered:

1. A serving of milk;
2. A food item from the fruit and vegetable component;
3. A food item from the grains component; and

4. A food item from the meat/meat alternate component **or** one additional item from the fruit and vegetable component **or** grains component.

All the food items offered must be different from each other. For example, while a flake cereal, such as bran flakes with raisins, and a puff cereal, such as a puffed rice cereal, are two types of cereals that are not identical, they are the same food item.

A child or adult must take at least three different food items from any of the food items offered. The food items selected may be from any of the required components and must be in the required minimum serving sizes. Here is an example of a reimbursable OVS breakfast menu:

- ½ cup berries;
- ½ cup grapefruit;
- 1 serving pancakes; and
- 1 cup (8 oz) of fluid milk

Under this menu, a child may take the berries, grapefruit and milk, OR, berries, pancakes and milk, and many other combinations. If the child takes two servings of pancakes and the milk, it is not a reimbursable meal because two of the food items are the same and all three items selected must be different from each other.

Depending on the planned menu, children and adults may need to select more than one food item to have the minimum serving size needed for a component to be credited towards a reimbursable meal. For example, an OVS breakfast menu for adults may include:

- ¼ cup melon;
- ¼ cup bananas;
- 1 cup of cereal;
- 1 cup of yogurt; and
- 1 cup (8 oz) of fluid milk.

In this situation, the adult must take the melon and bananas in order to select the ½ cup minimum serving size of the fruit and vegetable component required for adults at breakfast. It is the child or adult's choice to select or decline a food item. Adult day care centers or at-risk afterschool programs may not specify what food items a child or adult must select.

OVS at Lunch or Supper

The CACFP lunch and supper meal patterns requires all five food components to be offered: milk, meat/meat alternates, vegetables, fruits, and grains. Milk is optional for supper meals served in the adult day care centers.

When using OVS at lunch or supper, at least one food item from each of the five food components, in the required minimum serving sizes, required at lunch and supper must be offered:

1. A serving of milk*;
2. A food item from the meat/meat alternate component;
3. A food item from the vegetable component;
4. A food item from the fruit component; and
5. A food item from the grains component

*As noted above, milk is optional for supper for meals served in adult day care centers and does not need to be offered when serving an OVS supper in those settings. In all other situations, milk must be offered.

Similar to OVS at breakfast, all of the food items offered at lunch and supper must be different from each other. For example, while apple slices and apple sauce are two types of apples that are not identical, they are the same food item. Unlike OVS at breakfast, at lunch or supper meals using OVS, a child or adult must take at least three food components, rather than three items, to ensure the child or adult takes an adequately nutritious meal. A child or adult must select at least the minimum required serving size of the components for them to be counted. It is the child or adult's choice to select or decline a food component. Adult day care centers or at-risk afterschool programs may not specify what food components a child or adult must select.

Here is an example of a reimbursable OVS lunch menu:

- 2 ounces Parmesan Chicken;
- ½ cup spinach salad;
- ¼ cup broccoli;
- 1 cup pasta; and
- 1 cup (8 oz) of fluid milk.

Option to Offer an Increased Variety of Foods

When using OVS, menu planners have the option to go beyond the minimum requirements. Within each component, different food items may be offered, giving children and adults many combinations for building a reimbursable meal. Offering different food items when using OVS increases the likelihood that children and adults will select foods they prefer and reduces waste.

For example, an OVS lunch menu may offer milk, roasted chicken, black beans (credited as a meat alternate), rice, broccoli, and apple slices. This menu includes two food items from the meat/meat alternate component (roasted chicken and black beans) for children and adults to choose from. Please note, one serving of dry beans and peas may count towards the meat/meat alternate component or the vegetable component, but not both in the same meal. In this menu, the black beans are designated as a meat alternate. The menu planner must decide how dry beans or peas are credited prior to meal service and it

cannot be switched during meal service. Therefore, a child or adult could not select milk, roasted chicken and black beans and have it count as three components in this example.

As explained above, offering two servings of the same food item is not permissible under OVS in the CACFP. All food items offered must be different from each other. For example, an OVS breakfast with a serving of milk, banana, and two servings of toast (e.g. toasted enriched cinnamon-raisin bread and toasted whole-wheat bread) would not be reimbursable because the toast is two servings of the same food item.

However, a menu planner could provide children or adults choices within a food item as long as at least four different food items are offered at breakfast and at least five different food items are offered at lunch or supper meals. For example, an OVS breakfast could include:

- Milk;
- Banana;
- Two types of toast (e.g. toasted enriched cinnamon-raisin bread and toasted whole-wheat bread); and
- Cereal.

Further, a larger food item that is worth two servings in weight, such as a two ounce bagel, counts as only one food item under OVS in the CACFP, not two.

If the menu planner offers combination foods or two or more food items from one food component, such as bread and rice, instructions or signs must be available to let supervisors and participants know what choices make up a reimbursable meal. The instructions and signs should let an adult participant know that they cannot select two of the same food items or components. For example, an adult participant could not select two pieces of toast and milk and have it count towards a reimbursable breakfast because only two different food items were selected. Additionally, an adult participant could not select two servings of chicken and one serving rice and have it count towards a reimbursable lunch because only two components were selected.

II. FAMILY STYLE MEAL SERVICE

Family style meal service is a type of meal service that allows children and adults to serve themselves from communal platters of food with assistance from supervising adults, if needed. Family style meal service allows children and adults to be introduced to new foods, new tastes and new menus, while developing a positive attitude toward healthy foods, sharing in group eating situation and developing good eating habits. Unlike other types of meal services (e.g. cafeteria lines, vended meals, pre-plated service, and OVS), family style meals afford some latitude in the initial portion of food that is served. Additional servings of each food are readily available at each table and more can be served at any time.

Serving meals family style is optional and may be used in any CACFP setting. If a center or day care home chooses to serve meals family style they must comply with the following practices (7 CFR 226.26(n)):

1. A sufficient amount of prepared food must be placed on each table to provide the full required portions of each of the components, as outlined in 7 CFR 226.20(c)(1) and (2), for all children or adults at the table and to accommodate supervising adults if they wish to eat with the children and adults. See the question and answer section in the Attachment for an example.
2. Children and adults must be allowed to serve the food components themselves, with the exception of fluids (such as milk and juice). During the course of the meal, it is the responsibility of the supervising adults to actively encourage each child and adult to serve themselves the full required portion of each food component of the meal pattern. Supervising adults who choose to serve the fluids (including milk and juice) directly to the children or adults must serve the required minimum quantity to each child or adult. For example, children 3-5 years old must be served 6 fluid ounces of milk at breakfast, lunch and supper meals.
3. Centers and day care homes that use family style meal service may not claim second meals for reimbursement.

In line with the nutritional goals of the CACFP, family style meal service encourages a pleasant eating environment, promotes mealtime as a learning experience by allowing children to serve themselves from common platters of food (with assistance from supervising adults) and provides educational activities that are centered around food. Even when a complete family style meal service is not possible or practical, it may be useful to offer one component or multiple components in a family style manner. Supervising adults should provide assistance to children and adults as needed when serving foods from communal platters. This practice can help young children develop motor skills and the dexterity and hand strength needed to serve foods. For tips on how to successfully serve meals family style in CACFP, refer to the *Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children Supplement E: Support for Family Style Meals* available at http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/tn/Supplement_E.PDF.

III. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FAMILY STYLE MEAL SERVICE AND OVS

Both family style meals and OVS are types of meal service and there are some key differences between the two. First, food components in family style meals are self-served by the child or adult participant, while food components in OVS are pre-portioned or served directly by the provider or supervising adult.

Second, while children and adults must be offered the minimum required serving sizes of each required meal components in both family style meals and OVS, in family style meals, a child or adult does not need to take the full minimum required serving size of a food component to receive reimbursement.

When a child or adult does not take a food component or the full minimum serving size of a food component during family style meals, the supervising adult must encourage the child or adult to serve themselves the full minimum serving size. However, if the child or adult does not serve themselves a food component or take the full minimum serving size of a food component when using family style meal service, the meal may still be reimbursed. Alternatively, while the child or adult may decline some food items or components in OVS, they must take the full minimum serving size of the food components they choose in order for the meal to be reimbursable. The final key difference between family style meals and OVS is that family style meal service may be utilized in all CACFP settings, but OVS is only allowed in adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs.

| Family Style and Offer vs. Serve | | |
|---|--|---|
| | Family Style Meals | Offer vs. Serve |
| What CACFP settings may use this type of meal service? | All CACFP settings | Adult day care and at-risk afterschool programs only |
| What meals may be served using this type of meal service? | All meals, including snack | Breakfast, lunch, and supper only; OVS is not allowed at snack |
| Is the center or day care home required to offer the minimum serving size of each meal component for each participant? | Yes | Yes |
| Is the participant required to take the minimum required serving size of a meal component? | No | Yes |
| Who serves the food? | The child or adult participants (with assistance from the supervising adult if needed) | Pre-portioned or served directly by the provider or supervising adult |

Regional Directors

State Directors

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State agencies are reminded to distribute this information to Program operators immediately. Program operators should direct any questions regarding this memorandum to the appropriate State agency. State agency contact information is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>. State agencies should direct questions to the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Angela Kline". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "A".

Angela Kline

Director

Policy and Program Development Division

Attachment

Questions and Answers

I. OFFER VERSUS SERVE (At-risk and adult day care programs only)

1. How many items may a child or adult decline in OVS?

If an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program chooses to use OVS at breakfast, a child or adult may decline any one food item of the four food items offered. The adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program may choose to offer additional food items beyond the four required. For example, an OVS breakfast menu may consist of:

- Cereal and toast (two grain items);
- Orange slices and bananas (two fruit items); and
- Milk (one milk item).

In these cases, children or adults still have to take **at least three different** food items in order for the meal to be reimbursable but may decline more than one food item. In this example, a meal of cereal, toast and milk would be reimbursable. This is because two different grain items and a milk item were selected by the child or adult. The child or adult does not need to select a fruit/vegetable item in order for the meal to be reimbursable.

If an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program chooses to use OVS at lunch or supper, a child or adult must take food items from at least three food components, so when five food items (one food item from each of the required five food components) are offered a child or adult may decline up to two food items. Similar to breakfast, the adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program may choose to offer different food items within each required component, providing more choices for the child or adult to select from and the option to decline more than two food items. However, a child or adult must take food items from at least three food components for it to be a reimbursable lunch or supper, not just three different food items.

For example, this OVS lunch menu has six food items from the five food components:

- Milk (one milk item);
- Roasted turkey and yogurt (two meat/meat alternate items);
- Apple slices (one fruit item);
- Broccoli (one vegetable item); and
- Bread roll (one grain item).

There are many combinations a child or adult may select, some of those include:

- Milk, roasted turkey, and broccoli;

- Milk, broccoli and bread roll; and
- Yogurt, apple slices, and broccoli.

However, if a child or adult selects roasted turkey, yogurt and the bread roll, the meal is not reimbursable. This is because roasted turkey and yogurt are two food items from the same food component. Therefore, the selected meal only contains two food components (meat/meat alternates and grains) instead of the required three components.

It is the adult supervisor's responsibility to ensure that children and adults understand which foods they may decline under OVS. This can be done through signage and instructions to participants.

2. Under OVS, may a child or adult decline a combination food?

It depends. When adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs choose to use OVS at breakfast, at least four food items must be offered and a child or adult must take at least three of those food items and decline only one. Therefore, a child or adult may not decline a combination food at breakfast when four food items are offered.

For example, this breakfast menu includes a combination food and four food items:

- Milk (one milk item);
- Waffle with strawberries (combination food with a grain item and fruit item); and
- Orange slices (one fruit item).

In this situation, the child or adult must take the waffle with strawberries in order for the meal to be reimbursable. This is because if a child or adult declines the waffle with strawberries, there are only two other food items (milk and orange slices) for them to select and the child or adult must select three different food items in order for the breakfast to be reimbursable.

An adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program may choose to offer more than four food items at breakfast, such as:

- Milk (one milk item);
- Waffle with strawberries (combination food with a grain item and fruit/vegetable item);
- Orange slices (one fruit/vegetable item); and
- Cereal (one grain item).

In this situation, a child or adult would be able to decline the combination food (waffle with strawberries) and must take all the other food items (orange slices, cereal and milk) for the breakfast to be reimbursable.

When an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program chooses to use OVS at lunch or supper, at least one food item from each of the required five food components must be offered. The child or adult must take food items from at least three food components in order for the meal to be reimbursable. Therefore, if a combination food contains three or more food components and a total of five food items are offered (three of which are included in the combination food), a child or adult cannot decline the combination food.

For example, an OVS lunch menu may consist of:

- Milk (one milk item);
- Vegetable and bean burrito (combination food with three food items from three components: grain, vegetable, and meat/meat alternate); and
- Apple (one fruit item).

Under this menu, a child or adult must take the burrito in order for the meal to be reimbursable. This is because if a child or adult declines the burrito, then there are only two food components for them to select and three food components must be selected for the lunch to be reimbursable.

An adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program may choose to serve a lunch menu with a combination food and an additional three food items. For example, this lunch menu includes six food items and one combination food:

- Milk (one milk item);
- Vegetable and bean burrito (combination food with three food items from three components: grain, vegetable, and meat/meat alternate);
- Chicken strips (one meat/meat alternate item); and
- Apple (one fruit item).

Under this menu, the child or adult would be able to decline the combination food and must take all the other food components (the chicken strips, apple and milk) for the lunch to be reimbursable.

3. Is a child or adult required to take a vegetable or fruit in CACFP OVS?

A child or adult is not required to take a vegetable or fruit when an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program uses OVS. Under CACFP OVS, there are no specific food items or components that a child or adult must take. A child or adult must simply take three different food items at breakfast and three different food components at lunch or supper. While FNS encourages increased consumption of vegetables and fruits, it is the child or adult's choice to select or decline a food component. Additionally, children and adults should not be discouraged or prevented from taking all the food items offered during OVS.

4. Does OVS require an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program to offer daily choices within each of the food components?

No. Adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs that choose to use OVS must offer all the required food components while allowing participants to decline a limited number of food items or components they do not intend to eat. OVS does not require adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs to offer participants a variety of vegetables, fruits or choices within other components. However, when using OVS, FNS encourages adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs to offer a variety of food choices within the components to help increase the likelihood that children and adults will select foods they prefer, reduce waste and ensure children and adults are receiving enough food to meet their nutritional needs.

5. When an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program uses OVS, how do monitors ensure enough food is provided?

During onsite reviews, monitors should observe the meal service and ensure that adequate components and serving sizes are provided so that all children and adults are offered a reimbursable meal. Monitors may also review policies, training materials, receipts, menus, inventories, and invoices. Please note, maintaining production records is not a Federal requirement in CACFP.

6. When using OVS, if an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program runs out of a component, are all the meals served after the required component is no longer available disallowed?

Yes. Similar to other types of meal service, all the required food components in the required minimum serving sizes must be offered in order to be eligible for reimbursement. If an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program runs out of a food component when using OVS, all meals served after that point are not reimbursable because the adult day care food program or at-risk afterschool program was unable to offer the rest of the children or adults a complete reimbursable meal.

If an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program offers a breakfast menu with a ½ cup apples and a ½ cup bananas, (1/2 cup is the minimum serving size for the fruit and vegetable component at breakfast for children 6-12 years old, 13-18 years old, and adults), and the apples run out before all the participants are served, the meal would still be reimbursable. This is because a complete reimbursable meal is still offered.

However, if an adult day care center or at-risk afterschool program runs out of a food item it may be replaced with another food item in the same food component and the meals would still be reimbursable. For example, if a center serves oranges to meet the fruit component and runs out of oranges, the center may then begin serving apples in place of the oranges and still fulfill the fruit requirement.

II. FAMILY STYLE MEALS

1. How much food does a center or day care home need to initially serve on the table when serving meals family style?

The CACFP regulations require that the full required minimum serving sizes of each required food component of the meal (7 CFR 226.20(c)(1)-(2)) be placed on each table for all the children or adults at the table and to accommodate supervising adults if they wish to eat with the children or adults. For example, if there are 3 children between the ages 3-5 years and 1 supervising adult seated at a table for lunch, then at least ¼ cup of sliced apples must be available for each person. Therefore, a total of 1 cup of apple slices must be served in the communal plate or bowl that is placed on the table. In this example, a total of 1 cup of sliced apples must be placed in the communal bowl or plate to meet the ¼ cup per person requirement for the fruit component (this includes the ¼ cup of fruit for the supervising adult).

2. Can a center or day care home choose to serve just one food item family style?

Yes. Centers and day care homes may serve one component, multiple components or all the required components of a meal in common serving bowls, plates, dishes, pitchers or containers on the table. For tips on how to successfully serve meals family style in CACFP, refer to the *Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children's Supplement E: Support for Family Style Meals* available at http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/tn/Supplement_E.PDF.

3. If a child refuses to serve him/herself the full minimum serving size of a required food component, such as vegetables, during a family style meal, can that meal still be claimed for reimbursement?

Yes. When preparing foods for family style meals, enough food must be provided for each child, as well as any supervising adults who are eating with the children, to be able to take the full minimum serving size. Children and adults should be encouraged to take the full serving size, but they are not required to self-serve or consume the full serving size to claim reimbursement. If a child or adult refuses to take a component, the meal can also still be claimed for reimbursement when serving meals family style.

4. During family style meals, can a supervising adult assist a young child or adult that is not able to serve him or herself?

Yes. Children and adults must be allowed to serve themselves in family style meal service. However, supervising adults may assist young children or adults who are unable to serve themselves. In the case of young children, family style meals are an opportunity to help children develop motor skills. A center or day care home may choose to have children start by serving themselves one food item while the supervising adult acts as a model and serves the rest of the food items.

5. What if a child or adult serves themselves too much or too little food?

Children and adults can be guided to follow their hunger and fullness cues and be encouraged to eat accordingly. This is one of the benefits of family style meals: it allows children and adults to control how much they want to eat. To help children and adults take the appropriate serving size for their age, centers and day care homes can use serving utensils that provide the amount needed for one serving. For example, if the meal pattern requires ½ cup of fruit, use a ½ cup scoop, ladle or spoodle for participants to serve the fruit.

If a child or adult does not take the minimum serving size, he or she should be encouraged to take the full serving size. However, the child or adult does not have to self-serve or consume the full serving size in order for the meal to be reimbursable.

Conversely, if a child or adult takes more than the serving size for their age group, the meal is still reimbursable because the meal pattern serving sizes are minimums. If the food in a communal platter is emptied before each participant is served, then the platter must be re-filled so each participant is offered a complete reimbursable meal. And, as a reminder, second meals cannot be claimed for reimbursement when serving meals family style.

6. Can leftover food be stored safely and served in another reimbursable meal?

Centers and day care homes must be aware of and in compliance with all applicable local and State health and food safety codes. Therefore, centers and day care homes should refer to their local and State agencies to determine if leftover foods can be reused. It is important to keep in mind that local and State health and food safety codes may place specific limitations on which food or beverage items may be reused.