

Signage Requirements for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) require **sponsors** to post cafeteria signage that provides clear information about the daily planned reimbursable meals and all allowable choices. The purpose of this signage is to prevent unintentional purchases of a la carte items and help students choose reimbursable meals.

Two Signage Requirements

Sponsors must post two different types of cafeteria signage:

1. **Identify foods and amounts offered for all planned reimbursable meals:** Section 7 CFR 210.10(a)(2) of the NSLP regulations and section 7 CFR 220.8(a)(2) of the SBP regulations require that SFAs must post signage to identify the planned reimbursable meals (i.e., all offered full meals), including the components and portions and any choices or combination of choices available within each component. This signage must be located near or at the beginning of each serving line.
Note: This requirement applies to all schools and institutions, including those that do not implement offer versus serve (OVS) and those that implement family-style meal service.
2. **Identify required student selections for reimbursable meals with OVS:** Schools that implement OVS must indicate the minimum amount of each food component (lunch) or food item (breakfast) that students must select for a reimbursable meal, based on the planned daily menu for each grade group. This signage must be posted at all applicable points in the serving line where the meal components or food items are available.

For example, if the high school lunch menu offers fruits and vegetables in ½-cup servings and allows students to select two servings of fruits and two servings of vegetables to meet the required 1-cup serving for grades 9-12, the cafeteria signage must clearly communicate that students may select up to two servings of fruit and two servings of vegetables with each meal. This signage must be located on the serving line where the fruit and vegetable options are available.

For more information on signage with OVS, refer to the FDACS's *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals* and visit the "[Serving Lines Signage and Posters](#)" section of the FDACS's Meal Planning & Meal Service webpage.

This signage must clearly communicate the meal components for each daily menu choice offered and indicate what students must select for a reimbursable meal. Sponsors may choose how to identify the foods that are part of reimbursable meals, based on their facilities, layout, and other considerations. Examples of acceptable signage include menu boards, posters, computer printed signs and labels, and/or table tents.

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Sponsors are not required to provide detailed information about the meal components, such as identifying the Vegetable Subgroups. However, the state agency strongly encourages sponsors to provide detailed information whenever possible, within the constraints of the menu plan and serving line(s). This helps promote the school nutrition programs and makes it easier for students to understand what reimbursable meals include.

Reviewing Signage for Compliance

Use the checklist below to determine if cafeteria signage meets the USDA requirements. Answer these questions for each cafeteria serving line. If any answers are “no,” the sponsor must update the cafeteria signage as applicable.

- ☒ Is signage available for each daily lunch and breakfast choice at each serving line?
- ☒ Is signage clearly visible?
- ☒ Is signage located at or near the beginning of each serving line?
- ☒ Does the signage clarify what is allowed with each menu choice?
- ☒ Is the signage printed from a computer printer and/or look professional and legible?
- ☒ *OVS only sites:* Is signage located at the applicable points in the serving line near each food component (lunch) and food item (breakfast)?

Best practice strategy: to determine if the cafeteria signage is clear and effective, conduct a cafeteria walk-through. Look for and review any signage at the beginning of the serving line and continue through the entire serving line to the point of service.



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Resources

Offer versus Serve for Grades K-8 in School Nutrition Programs (FDACS):

<https://ccmedia.fdacs.gov/content/download/83986/file/OVS-K-8-Sample-Signage-Updated-04-30-2019.pdf>

Offer versus Serve Guidance for the NSLP and SBP (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/cn/SP41-2015av2.pdf>

Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals (FDACS):

<https://ccmedia.fdacs.gov/content/download/73661/file/Offer-Versus-Serve-Guide.pdf>

Offer versus Serve Materials (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offer-versus-serve-national-school-lunch-program-posters>

Offer versus Serve Tip Sheet for School Food Service Managers: National School Lunch Program (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offer-vs-serve-lunch-program-tip-sheet>

Signage for OVS (USDA's Offer versus Serve Materials webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/offer-versus-serve-national-school-lunch-program-posters>

USDA Regulations for the NSLP: Offer versus serve for grades K through 12 (7 CFR 210.10(e)):

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210#p-210.10\(e\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210#p-210.10(e))

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