



Offer Versus Serve Guidance for SFAs Participating in the CACFP and the SFSP

Purpose

This guidance is intended to clarify *who* may exercise the OVS option as well as the option's intended use. Additionally, this memorandum was revised to comply with USDA Policy Memorandum, SFSP 012019. This memorandum has been revised to cite regulatory legal authority for offer versus serve based upon the Final Rule - Streamlining Program Requirements and Improving Integrity in the Summer Food Service Program.

Legal Authority

7 CFR § 210.10(e); 7 CFR § 220.8(e); 7 CFR § 225.16(f)(1)(ii) and USDA Policy Memorandum SP 41-2015, *Updated Offer versus Serve Guidance for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program Effective Beginning School Year 2015-2016*, July 21, 2015.

Cross reference/see also

DECAL Policy Memoranda, *Meal Service Requirements in the Summer Meal Programs, with Questions and Answers (Revised)* and *Summer Food Service Program Memoranda - Waiver Rescission*, March 28, 2019 (v.3)

Program Requirements

Offer versus Serve (OVS) is a provision within both the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) that allows students to decline some of the food offered. It is an option for School Food Authorities (SFAs) participating in the CACFP At-Risk Program as well as those SFA sponsors participating in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).¹

Intended Purpose and Additional Guidance on OVS

OVS is designed to reduce food waste in the school meals programs while permitting students to decline foods they simply do not intend to eat. Participating SFA sponsors wishing to utilize OVS must complete and submit to DECAL the *Offer Versus Option for School Food Authorities (SFA)* form found [here](#) and located on DECAL's website. Once approved, SFAs will maintain this option for the current year and any subsequent year unless, the institution or sponsor notifies DECAL in writing within a reasonable time. Moreover, school sponsors that elect to use the NSLP or SBP meal pattern are required to follow the OVS requirements of NSLP and SBP.²

SFSP SFA sponsors may also elect to utilize the SFSP meal pattern which would require SFA sponsors to adhere to SFSP OVS requirements. Please see *Meal Service Requirements in the Summer Meal Programs, with Questions and Answers (Revised)* for guidance on the SFSP OVS requirements.

Additionally, offering choices within components does not necessarily constitute OVS. SFA sponsors are encouraged to give students options for entrees and side items and are required to offer a variety of milk. SFA sponsors which require students to select every component are not using OVS. Under OVS, students must be allowed to decline components (except for the required serving of a fruit or vegetable).

Note: SFAs are not required to utilize OVS.

Milk Decline and Required Documentation

As part of DECAL's compliance review process, institutions and sponsors are evaluated to determine if proper quantities of milk were served during meal service for a particular review month. In the case of OVS, institutions and sponsors must document the amount of milk declined per student, per meal service (*i.e.* breakfast and lunch) as well as the amount of milk being recycled **daily**. Like all other required documentation, this information must be available at the time of the review so that the reviewer may compare any declined and/or recycled milk to that of actual milk purchases when determining whether sufficient milk was offered to participants.

Note: Only individual unopened, self-contained cartons of milk may be recycled. SFAs cannot recycle milk that requires pouring in order to be served.

Comments

For questions concerning this memorandum, please contact the Policy Administrator at (404) 651-8193.

1. USDA Policy Memorandum, SP 10-2017, SFSP 06-2017 continued the extension of OVS to non-SFA sponsors as originally published in SFSP 11-2011. While OVS has been shown to minimize food waste and help sponsors contain costs, SFSP 01-2019 rescinded the extension, effectively limiting the use of OVS to strictly SFA sponsors as supported by 7 CFR § 225.16(f)(1)(ii).

2. For additional reference, see also 7 CFR 210.10(e), 7 CFR 220.8(e), and SP 57-2014, *Updated Offer versus Serve Guidance for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program in the School Year 2014-2015*.

