



# CACFP in NSLP

## Idaho School Nutrition Reference Guide

### OVERVIEW

Schools that serve meals to preschool age children and younger utilize the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern; however, USDA released memo SP 37-2017 along with further guidance to allow for flexibility when meal service of pre-K students and older students is co-mingled.

### TERMS TO KNOW

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) - A Federally-funded program that provides payments for eligible meals served to participants who meet age and income requirements. Meals served by participating institutions and facilities must meet minimum guidelines set by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The CACFP helps institutions and facilities serve well-balanced, nutritious meals to the participants in their care. Serving nutritious meals helps improve and maintain the health and nutritional status of participants in a day care environment and can help them develop and maintain good eating habits.

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) – A branch under USDA that administers the food and nutrition assistance programs, providing regulations and guidance materials.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) – The largest student nutrition program in the United States and the first such mandated by Congress.

Offer versus serve (OVS) - A menu planning and meal service concept that allows students to decline some of the food offered in a reimbursable meal, permitting students to choose the foods they want while reducing food waste. OVS is optional at breakfast for K-12 grade groups. OVS is optional at lunch for grades K-5 and 6-8, but is required for senior high school grades 9-12. For identifying a reimbursable meal under OVS, food components are counted at lunch, whereas food items are counted at breakfast.

School Breakfast Program (SBP) – A Federal program providing meals to children, at or close to the beginning of the school day, which meets nutritional requirements.

### WHAT IS CACFP IN NSLP?

Schools do not need to apply to participate in CACFP with the state agency in order to provide meals and receive reimbursement when CACFP-age children are enrolled in the school and served meals in a school that operates USDA school nutrition programs (SNP); CACFP-age students may be counted and claimed under SNP. CACFP age children that may be enrolled in schools include infants, toddlers, pre-school and pre-K children. Infants and toddlers must be

served the meals and snacks that meet the CACFP meal pattern. There are meal pattern options for pre-school and pre-K children.

### Co-Mingled, may follow SBP and NSLP

USDA released memo SP 37-2017 which allows for flexibility when schools serve meals to preschoolers, pre-K and K-5 students in the same service area at the same time, allowing the schools to serve the K-5 meal pattern to all. Further FNS guidance clarified:

- For breakfast, there is an overlap in the meal pattern requirements for grades K-12. As noted per SP 10-2012 v.9, a menu planner may offer the same food quantities to all children in grades K-12, provided that the meal meets the requirements of each grade group. Therefore, in situations in which preschoolers and/or pre-K are co-mingled with K-12 students at breakfast, schools can serve the K-5 meal pattern under 7 CFR 220.8 to all grade groups.
- For lunch, there is an overlap in the meal pattern requirements for grades K-5 and grades 6-8. Per SP 10-2012 v.9, since there is overlap, a single lunch menu can be used to meet the needs of K-8 students. Therefore, in situations in which preschoolers and/or pre-K are co-mingled with K-8 students, schools can serve the K-5 meal pattern under parts 7 CFR 210.10 to all grade groups. This flexibility for lunch cannot extend to accommodate co-mingling situations between preschools, pre-K and K-12 because the differences in the meal pattern requirements are too great to be met by one single menu. Furthermore, the meal patterns for school meal programs do not allow for K-12 or a 6-12 grade groupings during the lunch meal service.

The following chart helps explain what type of co-mingling is allowed under the regulations:

School Meal	Co-mingling of preschoolers and pre-K with K-5	Co-mingling of preschoolers and pre-K with K-8	Co-mingling of preschoolers and pre-K with K-12
Breakfast	Follow K-5 meal pattern under part 7 CFR 220.8	Follow K-5 meal pattern under part 7 CFR 220.8	Follow K-5 meal pattern under part 7 CFR 220.8
Lunch	Follow K-5 meal pattern under part 7 CFR 210.10	Follow K-5 meal pattern under part 7 CFR 210.10	Single menu flexibility not possible for K-12; however, preschoolers can be co-mingled with K-5 or K-8 students using the K-5 meal pattern.

Please see the Idaho School Nutrition Reference Guide sections on the Breakfast Meal Pattern and the Lunch Meal Pattern for details. Meal service would be provided to the pre-K students in the same manner of service as the other students, either Offer versus Serve (OVS) or serve. Schools may elect to provide the CACFP meal pattern on the cafeteria line, serve style, to students who are co-mingled; however, it may be difficult to identify these students and to train line staff regarding the different portion sizes required (e.g., at lunch, the NSLP daily

meat/meat alternate (m/ma) meal pattern for grade K-8 is 1 oz eq.; the CACFP m/ma meal pattern for ages 3-5 is 1.5 oz eq.).

### Not Co-mingled, follow CACFP

CACFP students (preschoolers and pre-K) who are not co-mingled must follow the appropriate CACFP meal pattern and must be served the full component portions indicated or be offered family style meal service. Note: Offer versus Serve (OVS) is not an option. Please refer to the **Meal Pattern Comparison chart under Resources**.

The CACFP amounts listed on the Meal Pattern Comparison chart are all minimums (there are no maximums). Further CACFP meal pattern requirements include:

- Must be unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children through 5 years old.
- Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.
- Meat / meat alternate may be used to meet the entire grain requirement a maximum of three times a week. One ounce m/ma is equal to one ounce equivalent grain.
- Pasteurized full strength juice may be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.
- A vegetable may be used to meet the entire fruit requirement. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper, two different kinds of vegetables must be served.
- At least one serving a day must be whole grain rich and beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents will be used in CACFP to determine the quantity of creditable grains.
- Grain-based desserts do not count towards meeting the grain requirement (sweet crackers allowed).
- Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

When serve-style is used at breakfast, all three CACFP components must be served/taken for a reimbursable meal. When serve-style is used at lunch, all five CACFP components must be served/taken for a reimbursable meal.

Family style meal service is a type of meal service that allows children to serve themselves from common platters of food with assistance from supervising adults, if needed. Family style meal service allows children 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. Children must be at the table, but may decline all foods and be claimed as long as components were offered.

## WHY IS CACFP IN NSLP IMPORTANT?

While FNS provides the flexibility of utilizing the SBP and NSLP meal patterns when pre-k students are co-mingled, FNS strongly encourages schools to find ways to serve grade-appropriate meals to all students to best address their nutritional needs prior to using any single menu flexibilities. For instance, innovative breakfast models for older students (e.g., Grab and Go, Breakfast in the Classroom) may be particularly helpful in preventing the co-mingling of preschoolers and pre-K with middle and high-school age children at breakfast.

## RESOURCES

Additional resources may be available for this topic. Please check the Idaho School Nutrition Reference Guide website for copies of manuals, user guides, and helpful links to relevant subject matter. Also, visit “Healthy Nutrition Environment” on the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.

---

### For Questions Contact

Child Nutrition Programs  
Idaho State Department of Education  
650 W State Street, Boise, ID 83702  
208 332 6820 | [www.sde.idaho.gov](http://www.sde.idaho.gov)

### USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the agency (state or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in

the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.