

Meal Service Styles in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)



Program operators must understand the meal service requirements for the meal service style that is being implemented in the sponsored center, site or home.

For more information on meal service styles, visit the CACFP Manual Section 16 "Meal Service Requirements" on the SDE website.

Family Style Meal Service

Considered "best practice" meal service style for feeding children in child care settings. Allows children to select the food items and quantity of each item.

- Children and adults serve the food components themselves with the supervising adult assisting as needed, using the hand over hand method.
- Sufficient amounts of prepared food must be placed on each table at the same time to provide the full required portions of each of the food components for all participants at the table.
- This includes accommodating the supervising adult if they wish to eat with the children and adults.



Pre-Plate Style Meal Service

Also known as restaurant style meal service.

- All food components are portioned and served on the plate and in the cup for each participant.
- Minimum portion sizes of each required component must be served at the same time to each participant at the beginning of the meal (unitized).



Combination Pre-Plate and Family Style

All the rules governing each service style apply to the foods served using that method.

- The full minimum required portion of one or more components are served pre-plated to each participant.
- The remaining components are served on the table in communal serving dishes or pitchers adhering to all of the family style meal service requirements.
- All components must be offered to participants at the same time.
Ex: Serving the meat and vegetable component, and then serving milk later in the service is not allowable.



Cafeteria Style Meal Service

Participants select food from a cafeteria line. Food is not available at the dining table.

- Participants are served the minimum required amounts of all required components their first time through the cafeteria line.
- Adults must supervise the cafeteria line to ensure each participant is served at least the minimum required portions of all required food components.



Offer Versus Serve (OVS)

OVS is only an allowable meal service option for the CACFP adult day care centers and At-risk after school programs.

Institutions that choose to use OVS must notify SDE and document which sites will be participating in the center site applications.