

Accurate Meal Counting

Sponsors are paid based on the number of meals served to children, so keeping an accurate meal count is an essential component of making sure the claims are also accurate.



Reimbursable Meals

Served to children 18 years and under

Meals served to disabled adults, ages 19 - 21, who participate in a public or private educational program may also be claimed for reimbursement. Adults can be served a meal, but the meals are not reimbursable.

Counted at the Point of Service (POS)

POS means at the point in which the child has received a complete and reimbursable meal. Typically, the count is taken at the end of the service line so that it can be verified that the meal is reimbursable. If the count is taken at the beginning of the line, someone must verify that the meal is reimbursable at the end of the line. Back out systems, such as tray counts, counting the number of lunches or entrees left after meal service *cannot* be used to determine the number of meals to claim.

Meet meal pattern requirements

Children must select a meal based on the meal pattern and offer vs serve (if applicable) for the appropriate meal type. Schools have a choice of selecting the

SFSP meal pattern or the NSLP/SBP meal pattern. Be sure to check the application to know which one has been approved.

Served during the approved meal service time

Sponsors report meal service times within the SFSP application and sites are to serve during those approved and advertised time periods. If it is determined that time is not working out, the site must communicate that to the sponsor so that the SFSP application can be updated and approved by DPI. If there is an unexpected occurrence (i.e., delay in meal delivery), the sponsor may request an alternate mealtime for that day, so that meals may be reimbursed. This can be done through [Alternate Meal Time Request Form](#).

Eaten Onsite – Congregate Sites

For congregate sites, children must eat meals on site, unless the meal is served during a field trip. Based on the sponsor's policy, only one item - a fruit, vegetable, or grain component, may be taken offsite; never a full meal.

Know Your Meal Types

1st Meals	Complete meal served to an eligible child 18 and under or adult that is disabled and participating in an educational program.
2nd Meals	Complete 2nd meal served to a child 18 and under or an adult that is disabled and participating in an educational program. Second meals must be served after all other children receive a 1st meal. Second meals cannot be served at non-congregate sites.
Program Adult Meals	Meal served to adults working directly with the operational side of the SFSP. Program Adult meals are an allowable SFSP expense but cannot be reimbursed.
Non-program Adult Meals	Meals served to all other adults. These are not an allowable cost to the SFSP so the adult or another fund must pay for them.
Disallowed Meals	Meals served to children that are not eligible for reimbursement (incomplete, taken offsite).

Choosing the best way to count meals

There are different ways a POS count can be taken. Different methods can be chosen based on how the site operates. Whichever method is chosen, develop policies and procedures to help ensure meal count integrity and train staff. Plan to check meal count records weekly for errors, missing information, fluctuations in numbers, and problems with delivery (if applicable).



Check-off or Tally Sheets

Person stands at the end of the meal service line and checks off meals by type (1st, 2nd, Program Adult, Non-program Adult, and Disallowed Meal) as they are served. Prototype meal count forms can be found online at: <https://dpi.wi.gov/community-nutrition/sfsp/market>.

Meals received		50	+ Meals available from previous day	0	=	50	(Total meals available)	0											
% pints milk received		50	+ % pints milk available from previous day	5	=	55	(Total % pints available)												
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120

Token or Popsicle Stick Method

Children pick up a token or popsicle stick at the beginning of the line and put it in a container at the end of the line after receiving a complete meal. Last server in line verifies the meal meets requirements and that the token/popsicle stick is placed in the container. Works well when there are limited staff. Need to use different color tokens or popsicle sticks and/or method to count 2nd meals and/or adult meals.



Computer POS System

Set up the appropriate meal types in a POS system. Person with computer, tablet, or smart phone is positioned at the end of the line and records the meals in the system as they are served. This method allows for the generation of reports at the end of the claim period resulting in more accurate claims. Can set-up your POS to download meal count data by site, into the site based claiming template that can be uploaded for quick and easy claim entry.



Clicker Counter Method

Person stands at the end of the meal service line and clicks for each complete meal that is served to a child. A different clicker or method is needed to count 2nd meals and/or adult meals.

Organization is Key

Consider providing sites with meal count forms pre-printed with the site name, dates, type of meal service, etc. Copy meal count forms for the various meal services on different colored paper, use light colors if forms are scanned or a photo sent - examples: breakfast on yellow, lunch on pink, supper on blue and snack on green. Request completed forms to be returned by a specific day/time.

Things to Consider

What if child wants to leave with a meal at a Congregate Site?

Plan ahead because it will happen! Post signs around the site, serving area, and put notices on menus that it is expected that children stay on site to eat. Make sure all staff at the site are aware of the rules so they can help. Remind children as they are coming through the line the first few days of the expectations. If you are unable to prevent a child from leaving with a meal, that meal is then disallowed. Establish a procedure to follow to ensure the meal is removed from the 1st meal count. DPI has a poster you can display in the serving area explaining what items can be taken off-site on the [Materials & Resources Page](#), under the Accurate Meal Counting tab.

Family Style Meal Service

Camps and enrolled sites can serve family style. The meal count must be taken when the children have been seated and have been offered all components of the meal.