Alabama State Department of Education in Meal Counting
Child Nutrition Programs
School Nutrition Programs

Counting Meals Served to Eligible Participants

School food authorities (SFA) are responsible for implementing effective internal controls to ensure accurate meal counts are done at the point of service (POS). All meals and snacks must be traceable to individual eligible students and their eligibility status through an approved counting method. Accurate meal counts are essential to preparing accurate and supported claims and preventing duplicate meals. This requirement applies to all meals or snacks served as part of the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Special Milk Program, and the Afterschool Snack Program.

Meal Counting Options

1. Online or Electronic Rosters:
    a. SFAs may use online or electronic methods for POS meal counting that identify which eligible participants receive a particular meal or snack.
    b. The State agency strongly encourages SFAs to use the software that it provides at no cost for meal counting. SFAs are responsible for purchasing the required hardware to use the system. The purchase is an allowable cost.
    c. SFAs must have a back-up procedure in place in case of power failures or connectivity issues.
2. Paper Rosters: SFAs may use paper rosters that identify which participants receive a particular meal or snack.
3. Afterschool Snack Program only:
    a. The school must keep a roster of all children eligible to participate in the afterschool activities program.
    b. An area eligible site may also use a sign-in sheet to capture names.
    c. A non-area eligible site may also use a coded roster that indicates if the student is free, reduced, or paid based on an Income Eligibility Form (IEF) or direct certification.

Additional Considerations

1. The use of bulk claim entries must be approved in advance by the ALSDE.
2. Tally sheets that record only the number of meals or snacks are not allowed. Tally sheets do not ensure meals or snacks were served to eligible students and that duplicate meals are not served.
3. Meal counting methods must ensure that free and reduced-price students are not overtly identified.
4. Employees involved in meal counting and claiming must be trained in appropriate procedures for meal counting and claiming.

Policy Approved: 11-16-2026

Appendix: Link to Resources

7 CFR 210.2 "Child"
7 CFR 210.2 "Child"

Reimbursement Limitations (NSLP and ASP)
7 CFR 210.7(c)
7 CFR 210.7(c)

Afterschool Snacks
7 CFR 210.10(o)
7 CFR 210.10(o)

Reimbursement Procedures (SMP)
7 CFR 215.10
7 CFR 215.10

Reimbursement Procedures (SBP)
7 CFR 220.11
7 CFR 220.11