

How to Count Number of Meals Served in Ontario's Student Nutrition Program

A fact sheet for program sites

What is this fact sheet about?

This fact sheet will help program sites count the number of meals served in their Student Nutrition Program. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services requires Lead Agencies to collect and report the number of meals served in all programs in their region.

General tips for counting number of meals served:

- The number of meals served is approximately equal to the number of:
 - Meals/snacks prepared for a program
 - Children/youth expected to participate in a program
- For reporting purposes, count one snack as one meal served

How should I count meals served in sit down programs?

Ask: How many meals/snacks are prepared for the program on an average day?

The number should reflect how many children/youth are expected to attend the program and not how many meals/snacks are taken.

For example, a lunch program prepares 80 servings of chickpea and vegetable curry, whole wheat naan, and white milk. Nine children ask for a smaller serving of curry, four ask for a second helping, and five do not have milk. The number of meals served is 80.

How should I count meals served in grab-and-go programs?

Ask: How many meals/snacks are prepared for the program on an average day?

The number should reflect how many meals/snacks are put out and not how many meals/snacks are taken.

For example, a breakfast program puts out 100 bananas, yogurts, and whole wheat English muffins. At the end of the morning, there are five bananas, eight yogurts, and two English muffins left over. The number of meals served is 100.

How should I count meals served in bin programs?

Ask: How many meals/snacks are put in the bins each day?

The number may reflect either total school enrollment (if the program serves every child or youth in every classroom) or program demand. A bin could last one or more days.

For example:

- A snack program fills 10 bins with 25 servings of baby carrots and hummus. Each bin is given to a different classroom and lasts one day. The number of meals served is 250.
- A snack program fills 15 bins with 60 apples and whole grain oatmeal cookies. Each bin is given to a different classroom and lasts three days. The number of meals served is 300 for each of the three days (900 meals in total).

How should I account for leftovers?

If you have leftovers from one meal/snack, it's okay to use them in another meal/snack as long as you follow safe food handling practices.* Do not subtract the leftovers from the number of meals served.

For example, a school has a grab-and-go breakfast program:

- One morning, the program puts out 70 apples, cheese strings, and whole grain carrot muffins. At the end of the morning, there are eight apples and five cheese strings left over. The number of meals served is 70.
- Later in the week, the program puts out 65 servings of whole fruit (a combination of apples and bananas), cheese strings, and whole grain toast with jam. Some of the apples and cheese strings are left over from earlier in the week. At the end of the morning, four pieces of fruit are left over. The number of meals served is 65.

What should I do if there are a lot of leftovers?

Record the number of meals served without subtracting leftovers, even if there are a lot.

Look into why there was a large number of leftovers and use this information to plan for future program meals. Consider the following questions:

- Did the children/youth not like the food that was offered that day?
- Were students off-campus due to a field trip or other event?
- Was there a weather event (e.g., snow storm) that affected school attendance?
- Did a nearby off-campus food establishment have a promotion for students?

If your program frequently has a large number of leftovers, talk to your Lead Agency.

Where can I get more information?

Please contact your Student Nutrition Program Lead Agency if you have questions.

* Refer to the 2016 Student Nutrition Program Nutrition Guidelines for information about safe food handling practices.