



## Manager's Corner

# Communication on the Serving Line: Substitutions

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Improve the operation of child nutrition programs through research, education and training, and information dissemination.

### **VISION**

Lead the nation in providing research, education, and resources to promote excellence in child nutrition programs.

### **MISSION**

Provide relevant research-based information and services that advance the continuous improvement of child nutrition programs.

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## Professional Standards

### COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING – 4100

**Employee will be able to develop plans that include involvement with school and community members, empowers school nutrition leaders, and address excellent customer service.**

4140 – Communication Skills  
Develop communications skills.

## Introduction

*Manager's Corner: Communication on the Serving Line: Substitutions* is designed to empower managers to use in training their staff. Each lesson is roughly 15 minutes. This lesson plan contains:

- Learning objective
- Statement explaining the importance of the topic
- List of materials
- Instructions on how to present the information
- Questions to ask staff
- An activity to strengthen or refresh the knowledge of the staff

## Lesson Overview

### Instructions for lesson:

- Review the lesson objective and background information.
- Review why it is important.
- Ask staff the questions.
- Facilitate the activity outlined.
- Provide time for staff to ask questions.

**Objective:** Identify effective communication methods regarding menu substitutions on the serving line.

**Background information:** Having effective communication among staff when it comes to menu substitutions ensures students receive a reimbursable meal, improves the quality of meal service, and builds communication skills. As a best practice, staff should notify the team when they pull the second to last pan of a menu item. If a substitution is needed, the kitchen staff will communicate with the manager to identify an appropriate substitution. The new food item should be added to the production record. The number of servings produced and the number of servings served should be recorded. This information will be vital for future forecasting.

**Why it is important:** Having effective communication among staff when it comes to menu substitutions is a critical step in keeping serving lines properly stocked with food.

## Questions for Staff

- **Why is it important to communicate regarding substitutions?**

**Answer:**

- Ensures the student is receiving a reimbursable meal
- Improves the quality of service
- Builds communication skills



- **Who do you communicate with when you are running out of a menu item?**

**Answer:** Notify the kitchen staff when a menu item is running low, preferably before the item runs out. If a substitution is needed, the kitchen staff will communicate with the manager to identify an appropriate substitution. Make sure to add the food item to the production record and record the number of servings produced and the number of servings served. This information will be vital for future forecasting.

- **When do you communicate you are running out of a menu item?**

**Answer:** One best practice is to notify staff when you pull the second to the last pan of the menu item.

**Please note:** The answers provided are only examples and are not an inclusive list of possible responses.

## Activity: Staff Communication

**Activity materials included in this document:**

No supplemental materials are included in this document.

**Materials provided by the school nutrition operation:**

- Site menu
- Pens/pencils
- Paper for taking notes

**Activity Instructions:**

It takes teamwork and clear communication to maintain an efficient meal service. Using your site menu, facilitate a discussion with your staff regarding how your team can communicate effectively during meal periods, specifically regarding how to keep serving lines filled with fresh food and communicate menu changes if substitutions are needed before or during service.

Suggested discussion topics:

- Look at the menu, and identify popular items that have run out in the past.
  - Identify methods to prevent future occurrences of menu items running out.
  - What is an approved substitution if the item does run out again?
- Identify the person(s) responsible for communicating when food needs to be replenished and the person(s) responsible for receiving the information.
  - If a menu substitution is required, identify who is responsible for making the substitution, and how it will be communicated to staff and customers.
- Develop a department standard for when to communicate that a food item(s) is running low.
  - Cooking and preparation times will vary based upon the menu item.
  - Use your site menu to identify cooking and preparation times for food items currently on your site's cycle menu.

## References

United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Professional standards for school nutrition professionals*. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/professional-standards>



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