

Summary of Requirements for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs

The chart in this document summarizes the requirements for meal modifications in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [school nutrition programs](#), including the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), [Afterschool Snack Program \(ASP\)](#) of the NSLP, [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#) of the NSLP, [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program \(FFVP\)](#), [Special Milk Program \(SMP\)](#), and [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#) [At-risk Supper Program](#) implemented in schools.

Required modifications for children whose disability restricts their diet

The USDA's nondiscrimination regulations ([7 CFR 15b](#)) and school nutrition program regulations ([7 CFR 210.10\(m\)](#) and [7 CFR 220.8\(m\)](#)) require reasonable meal modifications for children whose disability restricts their diet, based on written documentation from a recognized medical authority (physician, physician assistant, doctor of osteopathy, and advanced practice registered nurse). For guidance on the meal modification requirements for children with a disability, refer to section 2 of the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#). Additional resources and medical statement forms are available on the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Under the [Americans with Disabilities \(ADA\) Amendments Act of 2008](#), most physical and mental impairments will constitute a disability. This includes conditions that impair immune, digestive, neurological, and bowel functions, as well as many others. A physical or mental impairment does not need to be life threatening to constitute a disability. If a recognized medical authority determines that food intolerance is a disability for a particular child, the school food authority (SFA) must make a reasonable meal modification based on the medical statement.

Optional modifications for children without a disability

SFAs may choose to make optional modifications within the USDA's school meal patterns on a case-by-case basis for children whose dietary restrictions are not related to a disability. A medical statement is required if these optional modifications are outside the school meal patterns. For information on the school meal patterns, visit the CSDE's webpages, [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#), [Afterschool Snack Program](#), and [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#); and refer to the CSDE's guides, [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#), [Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [ASP Handbook](#). For guidance on optional meal modifications, refer to section 3 of the CSDE's [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#).

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Scenario	Determination of disability	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions ¹	Modification required?	Required documentation	Medical statement must include
Child is determined to have a disability (physical or mental impairment) under Section 504, and the disability restricts the child's diet	Section 504 meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 504 plan and Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP) May also have an Emergency Care Plan (ECP) depending on child's medical condition 	Medical conditions that substantially limit a major life activity and affect the child's diet, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> metabolic diseases, such as diabetes or phenylketonuria (PKU) food anaphylaxis (life-threatening food allergy) 	Yes	Medical statement signed by recognized medical authority (or 504 plan, if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about how the child's physical or mental impairment restricts the child's diet An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child The food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate
Child is determined to have a disability (physical or mental impairment) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the disability restricts the child's diet	Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualized Education Program (IEP) and IHCP May also have an ECP depending on child's medical condition 	Medical conditions that meet the IDEA recognized disability categories, require related services under IDEA, and affect the child's diet, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> autism traumatic brain injury other health impairment, e.g., heart condition and diabetes 	Yes	Medical statement signed by recognized medical authority (or IEP, if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about how the child's physical or mental impairment restricts the child's diet An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child The food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate

¹ These examples of medical conditions are not all-inclusive and might not require meal modifications for all children. The determination of whether a child has a physical or mental impairment that restricts their diet must be made on a case-by-case basis, i.e., specific to the individual medical condition and dietary needs of each child.

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Scenario	Determination of disability	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions ¹	Modification required?	Required documentation	Medical statement must include
Child is not determined to have a disability (physical or mental impairment) under Section 504 or IDEA, but the child's medical condition meets the definition of disability under the ADA Amendments Act; and the disability restricts the child's diet	Recognized medical authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IHCP • May also have an ECP depending on child's medical condition 	<p>Medical conditions that do not qualify for a disability under Section 504 or IDEA, but may meet the definition of disability under the ADA Amendments Act (i.e., any condition that substantially limits a child's major life activity), for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • celiac disease • gluten intolerance • lactose intolerance • non-life-threatening food allergies • obesity • certain temporary disabilities <p>Note: Not all conditions require meal modifications for all children.</p>	Yes	Medical statement signed by recognized medical authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how the child's physical or mental impairment restricts the child's diet • An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child • The food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate
¹ These examples of medical conditions are not all-inclusive and might not require meal modifications for all children. The determination of whether a child has a physical or mental impairment that restricts their diet must be made on a case-by-case basis, i.e., specific to the individual medical condition and dietary needs of each child.						

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Scenario	Determination of disability	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions ¹	Modification required?	Required documentation	Medical statement must include
Personal food preferences	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	No ^{2,3}	Not applicable	Not applicable
Vegetarianism	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	No ^{2,3}	Not applicable	Not applicable
Religion	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	No ^{2,3}	Not applicable	Not applicable
<p>¹ SFAs are not required to make meal modifications for children whose dietary restrictions are not related to a disability, such as individual food preferences, general health concerns, and religious, ethnic, and moral reasons. SFAs may choose to make these optional modifications on a case-by-case basis. A medical statement is not required for optional modifications within the meal patterns. A medical statement is required for optional modifications outside the meal patterns.</p> <p>² SFAs may choose to offer one or more allowable milk substitutes for children whose dietary needs do not constitute a disability. The allowable substitutes include: 1) lactose-reduced or lactose-free milk with the appropriate fat content for each grade group, i.e., low-fat milk and fat-free milk (unflavored or flavored) for grades K-12; whole unflavored milk for age 1; and unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk for ages 2-4; and 2) nondairy milk substitutes that meet the USDA's nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes, such as certain brands of soy milk. Nondairy milk substitutes require a written request from the parent or guardian that identifies the medical or other special dietary need that restricts the child's diet and requires the nondairy milk substitute. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, <i>Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs</i>.</p>						

Resources

Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cn/SP40-2017a1.pdf>

Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Milk_Substitutes_SNP.pdf

CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 13-17: Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2017/OM13-17.pdf>

Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Guide_Meal_Modifications_SNP.pdf

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Managing Food Allergies in the Cafeteria: The Role of School Food Service Managers and Staff (CSDE Presentation):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Managing_Food_Allergies_Cafeteria_SNP_Presentation.pdf

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Medical Statements for School Nutrition Programs (“Documents/Forms” section of CSDE’s Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage)

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#MedicalStatements>

Requirements for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE Presentation):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Special_Diets_Presentation_SNP.pdf

Requirements for Procedural Safeguards for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Procedural_Safeguards_SNP.pdf

Self-assessment of Local Practices for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Assessment_Meal_Modifications_SNP.pdf

Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):

<http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

USDA Memo SP 26-2017: Accommodating Disabilities in the School Meal Programs: Guidance and Questions and Answers (Q&As):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/accommodating-disabilities-school-meal-programs-guidance-and-qas>

USDA Memo SP 59-2016: Policy Memorandum on Modifications to Accommodate Disabilities in the School Meal Programs:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/policy-memorandum-modifications-accommodate-disabilities-school-meal-programs>

USDA Nondiscrimination Regulations (7 CFR B):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-A/part-15b>

USDA NSLP Regulations (7 CFR 210):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-210>

USDA SBP Regulations (7 CFR 220):

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-II/subchapter-A/part-220>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Summary_Chart_Meal_Modifications_SNP.pdf

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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