

Summary Charts of the Requirements for Meal Modifications for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

The charts in this document summarize the meal modification requirements for child care centers, family day care homes, emergency shelters, and at-risk afterschool care centers that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). For detailed guidance, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and visit the CSDE’s [Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage.



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Overview of Requirements for Meal Modifications

The requirements for meal modifications for children in the CACFP are defined by the USDA's nondiscrimination regulations ([7 CFR 15b](#)) and CACFP regulations ([7 CFR 226.20\(g\)](#)). These regulations outline the required modifications for children whose disability restricts their diet (disability reasons) and the optional modifications for children who do not have a disability but have other special dietary needs (non-disability reasons).

The USDA requires reasonable meal modifications on a case-by-case basis for children whose disability restricts their diet, based on written documentation from a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian. Meal modifications must be related to the disability or limitations caused by the disability.

The requirements for optional meal modifications for non-disability reasons depend on whether they are within or outside the CACFP meal patterns.

- **Modifications within the CACFP meal patterns:** Meal modifications are within the meal patterns if they are only modified for texture (such as chopped, ground, or pureed foods) or they include substitutions within the same meal component, such as a banana for strawberries (fruits component), lactose-free milk for regular milk (milk component), and chicken for pork (meats/meat alternates component). These modifications do not require a medical statement. However, the CSDE recommends obtaining a medical statement to ensure clear communication between parents/guardians and the CACFP facility regarding the appropriate meal modifications for the child. [Chart 1](#) summarizes the requirements for meal modification requests for disability reasons.
- **Modifications outside the CACFP meal patterns:** Meal modifications are outside the meal patterns if they include noncreditable foods. Noncreditable foods are foods and beverages that do not meet the CACFP meal pattern requirements for reimbursable meals and snacks. Examples include entrees that do not meet the meats/meat alternates component and substituting rice milk for cow's milk. Meal modifications for non-disability reasons that are outside the meal patterns require a medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian. [Chart 2](#) summarizes the requirements for meal modification requests for non-disability reasons.

For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE's [Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs](#), and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage.

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Chart 1: Meal Modification Requests for Disability Reasons

The examples of medical conditions below 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 based on a medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian.

- “Case-by-case basis” means specific to the individual medical condition and dietary needs of each child, based on the specific information provided by the state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian in the child’s medical statement or, if applicable, the child’s Section 504 plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- A state licensed healthcare professional is an individual who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law. The Connecticut State Department of Public Health (DPH) defines these individuals as physicians (MD), physician assistants (PA) and certified physician assistants (PAC), doctors of osteopathy (DO), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN).

Meal modifications are required for children with a disability that restricts their diet.

Type of request	Disability determined by	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions	Required documentation
The child is determined to have a disability (physical or mental impairment) under Section 504; the disability restricts the child’s diet; and the required meal modification is outside the CACFP meal patterns	Section 504 meeting	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 metabolic diseases, such as diabetes or phenylketonuria (PKU) and food anaphylaxis (life-threatening food allergy)	Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian (or IEP or 504 plan, if applicable) Medical statement must include: 1) information about how the child’s physical or mental impairment restricts the child’s diet; 2) an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child; and the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate

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Type of request	Disability determined by	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions	Required documentation
The child is determined to have a disability (physical or mental impairment) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); the disability restricts the child's diet; and the required meal modification is outside the CACFP meal patterns	Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Meeting	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 autism, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairment, e.g., heart condition and diabetes	Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian (or IEP, if applicable) Medical statement must include: 1) information about how the child's physical or mental impairment restricts the child's diet; 2) an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child; and the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate

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Type of request	Disability determined by	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions	Required documentation
The 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 a disability under the ADA Amendments Act; the disability restricts the child's diet; and the required meal modification is outside the CACFP meal patterns	State licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian	IHCP May also have an ECP depending on child's medical condition	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 major life activity) Examples include celiac disease, gluten intolerance, lactose intolerance, non-life-threatening food allergies, obesity, and certain temporary disabilities	Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian (or IEP, if applicable) Medical statement must include: 1) information about how the child's physical or mental impairment restricts the child's diet; 2) an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child; and the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate

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Chart 2: Meal Modification Requests for Non-disability Reasons

Meal modifications are optional for children who do not have a disability that restricts their diet.

Type of request	Required documentation for meals outside the CACFP meal patterns	Required documentation for meals within the CACFP meal patterns
Personal food preferences, e.g., gluten-free foods, organic foods, or nondairy milk substitutes like almond milk or oat milk	Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian that indicates: 1) information about how the child's religious or moral convictions restrict the child's diet; 2) an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child; and 3) the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate	None, but medical statement is recommended
Vegetarian diets, e.g., flexitarian, pescatarian, lacto-ovo-vegetarian, and vegan	Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian that indicates: 1) information about how the child's religious or moral convictions restrict the child's diet; 2) an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child; and 3) the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate	None, but medical statement is recommended
Religious or moral convictions	Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian that indicates: 1) information about how the child's religious or moral convictions restrict the child's diet; 2) an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child; and 3) the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate	None, but medical statement is recommended

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Resources

Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/milk_substitutes_cacfp.pdf

CACFP regulations 7 CFR 226.20(g)(1): Modifications for disability reasons (USDA):

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-226#p-226.20\(g\)\(1\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-226#p-226.20(g)(1))

CACFP regulations 7 CFR 226.20(g)(1): Modifications for disability reasons (USDA):

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-226#p-226.20\(g\)\(1\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-226#p-226.20(g)(1))

CACFP regulations 7 CFR 226.20(g)(3): Fluid milk substitutes for non-disability reasons (USDA):

[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-226#p-226.20\(g\)\(3\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-226#p-226.20(g)(3))

Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/guide_special_diets_cacfp.pdf

Identifying Products that Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/identify_allowable_nondairy_milk_substitutes_cacfp.pdf

CACFP Infant Meal Pattern (CSDE's Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/feeding-infants-in-cacfp-child-care-programs#InfantMealPattern>

Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-for-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Medical Statements (CSDE's Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program/medical-statements>

Overview of the Requirements for Children in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/overview_meal_modifications_cacfp.pdf

Sample Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Meal Modifications in Child Care Facilities in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/sample_sop_meal_modifications_cacfp.docx

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Self-assessment of Child Care Practices for Meal Modifications in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/assessment_meal_modifications_cacfp.pdf

Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

USDA Memo CACFP 14-2017 and SFSP 10-2017: Policy Memorandum on Modifications to Accommodate Disabilities in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/modifications-accommodate-disabilities-cacfp-and-sfsp>

USDA Nondiscrimination Regulations (7 CFR B):

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

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Special Diets in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/specdiet/summary_chart_meal_modifications_cacfp.pdf) webpage or contact the [CACFP 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/cacfp/specdiet/summary_chart_meal_modifications_cacfp.pdf.

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Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
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