

Summary Charts of the Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs

The charts in this document summarize the meal modification requirements for public schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCIs) that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) school nutrition programs. The school nutrition programs include the [National School Lunch Program \(NSLP\)](#), [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#), [Afterschool Snack Program \(ASP\)](#) of the NSLP, [Seamless Summer Option \(SSO\)](#) of the NSLP, [Special Milk Program \(SMP\)](#), [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program \(FFVP\)](#), and [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\) At-risk Supper Program](#) implemented in schools.

Overview of Requirements for Meal Modifications

The requirements for meal modifications for children participating in the school nutrition programs are defined by the USDA's nondiscrimination regulations ([7 CFR 15b](#)) and school nutrition program regulations ([7 CFR 210.10\(m\)](#) and [7 CFR 220.8\(m\)](#)). 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 USDA meal patterns.

- **Modifications within the USDA 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 only 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 SFA regarding the appropriate meal modifications for the child.
- **Modifications outside the USDA 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 meal pattern requirements for reimbursable meals and afterschool 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.

For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE's [Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Program](#) and [Guide to Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs](#), and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

[Chart 1](#) summarizes the requirements for meal modification requests for disability reasons. [Chart 2](#) summarizes the requirements for meal modification requests for non-disability reasons.

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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).

Type of request	Determination of disability	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions	Modification required?	Required documentation	Medical statement must include
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 USDA meal patterns	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 	<p>Medical conditions that substantially limit a major life activity and affect the child’s diet, for example:</p> <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 a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian (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

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Type of request	Determination of disability	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions	Modification required?	Required documentation	Medical statement must include
<p>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 USDA meal patterns</p>	<p>Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualized Education Program (IEP) and IHCP • May also have an ECP depending on child's medical condition 	<p>Medical conditions that meet the IDEA recognized disability categories, require related services under IDEA, and affect the child's diet, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autism • traumatic brain injury • other health impairment, e.g., heart condition and diabetes 	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian (or IEP, if applicable)</p>	<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

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Type of request	Determination of disability	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions	Modification required?	Required documentation	Medical statement must include
<p>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 USDA meal patterns</p>	<p>State licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian</p>	<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>Yes</p>	<p>Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian</p>	<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

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Chart 2: Meal Modification Requests for Non-disability Reasons

Type of request	Modification required?	Required documentation for meals outside the USDA meal pattern	Required documentation for meals within the USDA meal pattern
Personal food preferences, e.g., gluten-free foods, organic foods, or nondairy milk substitutes like almond milk or oat milk	No	Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian that indicates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how the child’s personal food preferences restrict 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None, but medical statement is recommended
Vegetarian diets, e.g., flexitarian, pescatarian, lacto-ovo-vegetarian, and vegan	No	Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian that indicates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how the child’s vegetarianism 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None, but medical statement is recommended
Religious or moral convictions	No	Medical statement signed by a state licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian that indicates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how the child’s religious or moral convictions restrict 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None, but medical statement is recommended

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Resources

Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs (USDA):
<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cn/SP40-2017a1.pdf>

Allowable Fluid Milk Substitutes for Non-disability Reasons in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/milk_substitutes_snp.pdf

Guide to Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/guide_meal_modifications_snp.pdf

Identifying Products that Meet the USDA's Nutrition Standards for Fluid Milk Substitutes in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/identify_allowable_nondairy_milk_substitutes_snp.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 (CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/special-diets-in-school-nutrition-programs/medical-statements>

NSLP regulations 7 CFR 210.10(d)(2): Fluid milk substitutes for non-disability reasons (USDA):
[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.10\(d\)\(2\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.10(d)(2))

NSLP regulations 7 CFR 210.10(m)(1): Modifications for disability reasons (USDA):
[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.10\(m\)\(1\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.10(m)(1))

NSLP regulations 7 CFR 210.10(m)(2): Variations for non-disability reason (USDA):
[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.10\(m\)\(2\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-210#p-210.10(m)(2))

Overview of the Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Program (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/overview_meal_modifications_snp.pdf

Requirements for Procedural Safeguards for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/procedural_safeguards_snp.pdf

Sample Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/nslp/specdiet/sample_sop_meal_modifications_snp.pdf

SBP regulations 7 CFR 220.8(m): Modifications and variations in reimbursable meals (USDA):
[https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-220#p-220.8\(m\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/part-220#p-220.8(m))

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Self-assessment of Local Practices for Meal Modifications in the 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 Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [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/nsjp/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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