Special Dietary Needs

USDA Child Nutrition Programs support access to healthy meals to all children, including children with disabilities who have special dietary needs. Under the law, a disability is an impairment which substantially limits a major life activity, which can include allergies and digestive conditions, but does not include personal diet preferences.

Requirements:

✓ Make reasonable modifications to meal(s) on a case-by-case basis to accommodate disabilities which restrict a child’s diet
  o Meals must be provided at no extra charge
  o It is not necessary to offer specific brands or fundamental alterations to the program

✓ The request for meal modifications must include:
  o Food(s) to be omitted/avoided from the child’s diet
  o How the ingestion of the food impacts the child
  o Food(s) to be substituted

✓ Requests for meal modification must be signed by a State-recognized medical authority, a licensed health care professional authorized to write medical prescriptions in Washington
  o Authorized in Washington State (as of September 2015)
    ▪ Medical Doctor (MD)
    ▪ Doctor of Osteopathy (DO)
    ▪ Physician’s Assistant (PA) with prescriptive authority
    ▪ Naturopathic Physician
    ▪ Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP)

✓ Develop and implement processes and procedures for requests for meal modifications:
  o Ensure that parents / guardians are informed of:
    ▪ How to request meal modifications
    ▪ The process for resolving disputes about meal modifications
  o Provide an impartial process to address grievances related to the request for modification
    ▪ Give opportunity to the child’s parent / guardian to participate and be represented by counsel
    ▪ Notify parents / guardians of final decision and procedure for review
  o Train food service staff on procedures for handling requests for meal modifications
  o Coordinate with school district’s Section 504 Coordinator to ensure compliance with any additional Section 504 requirements
Schools are highly encouraged to develop a team approach to providing modifications for children with disabilities
   - Potential team members: Section 504 Coordinator, school nurse, school principal and school food service staff

Use the Dietary Prescription Form applicable for your program
   - School Meal Programs
   - Child and Adult Care Food Program
   - Summer Food Programs

Reference:
   ✓ 7 CFR 210.10
   ✓ 7 CFR 225.16
   ✓ 7 CFR 220.8
   ✓ SP 59-2016
   ✓ SP 36-2013, SFSP 12-2013, CACFP 10-2013
   ✓ Title 18 RCW – Businesses and Professionals

Acronym Reference

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<td>-CACFP</td>
<td>Child and Adult Care Food Program</td>
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