

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
 - Meals must be provided at no extra charge
 - Accommodations must be made on a case by case basis
 - It is not necessary to offer specific brands or fundamental alterations to the program

- ✓ The request for meal modifications must include:
 - Food(s) to be omitted/avoided from the child's diet
 - How the ingestion of the food impacts the child
 - 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:
 - Medical Doctor (MD)
 - Doctor of Osteopathy (DO)
 - Physician's Assistant (PA) with prescriptive authority
 - Naturopathic Physician
 - Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP)

- ✓ A [Request for Special Dietary Accommodations form](#) is available for your use.
 - This form is not required – but other documents that request for meal modifications must include the items indicated above

- ✓ Develop and implement processes and procedures for requests for meal modifications:
 - Ensure that parents / guardians are informed of:
 - How to request meal modifications
 - The process for resolving disputes about meal modifications
 - 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

OSPI Child Nutrition Programs Reference Sheet

- Notify parents / guardians of final decision and procedure for review
- Train food service staff on procedures for handling requests for meal modifications
- 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
- ✓ Document meals/milk served to students with special dietary needs on production records.
 - Production records can reference a special diet recipe or list each of the special dietary items provided

Reference:

- ✓ [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](#)
- ✓ [Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
- ✓ [SP40-2017 2017 Edition of Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs](#)
- ✓ [SP26-2017 Accommodating Disabilities in the School Meal Programs: Guidance and Q&As](#)
- ✓ [SP59-2016](#)
- ✓ [Title 18 RCW – Businesses and Professionals](#)

Acronym Reference

-CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
-CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
-CNS	Child Nutrition Services
-LEA	Local Education Agency
-OSPI	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
-SFSP	Summer Food Service Program
-SP	School Programs
-USDA	United States Department of Agriculture