

OSPI Child Nutrition Programs Reference Sheet

Special Dietary Needs

United States Department of Agriculture (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. This 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, or a Registered Dietitian:
 - Medical Doctor (MD)
 - Doctor of Osteopathy (DO)
 - Physician's Assistant (PA) with prescriptive authority
 - Naturopathic Physician
 - Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP)
 - **NSLP/SBP and CACFP Only:** Registered Dietitian (RD or RDN)¹
- ✓ 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

¹ For SFSP, a waiver may be available to allow RD signatures. Contact your Specialist to learn more.



- 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
- Train food service staff on procedures for handling requests for meal modifications
- Inform households of the process for accommodating special dietary needs on the sponsor's food service webpage (as applicable)

For LEAs Operating NSLP/SBP Only:

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Coordinate with the school district's [Section 504 Coordinator](#) to ensure compliance with any additional [Section 504 requirements](#)
- ✓ 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

- [Final Rule – CNP Meal Patterns Consistent with 2020-2025 DGAs](#)
- [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](#)
- [CACFP 14-2017, SFSP 10-2017: Modifications to Accommodate Disabilities in the CACFP and SFSP](#)

Acronym Reference

- CACFP – Child & Adult Care Food Program
- CNS – Child Nutrition Services
- LEA – Local Education Agency
- NSLP – National School Lunch Program
- OSPI – Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- SBP – School Breakfast Program
- SFSP – Summer Food Service Program
- USDA – United States Department of Agriculture