

## Guidelines for Students with Special Diets

If your child has been identified as having a disability and has special dietary needs, changes can be made to your child's school breakfast and/or lunch at no extra charge with the proper documentation from a physician.

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### Is your child eligible?

Your child is eligible if he or she has been identified as having a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and has special dietary needs. USDA regulations (7 CFR Part 15b) require substitutions or modifications in school meals for children whose disabilities restrict their diets.

Some examples of special dietary needs that are considered disabilities:

- Celiac disease
- Diabetes
- Food allergies that result in severe, life threatening (anaphylactic) reaction
- PKU

### **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, a "person with a disability" means any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment. A major life activity is defined as caring for one's self, eating, doing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working. The term "physical or mental impairment" includes many diseases and conditions.

### **Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

The term child with a "disability" under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) means a child evaluated in accordance with IDEA as having one or more of the recognized disability categories and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.

For more information on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, please visit the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights website at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) and for more information on Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, please visit the U.S. Department of Education IDEA website at <http://idea.ed.gov/>.

## What types of meal modifications can be made?

Possible modifications include but are not limited to:

- Food restrictions (milk and milk products, gluten, eggs, etc.)
- Increased calories
- Texture changes (pureed, ground, chopped, thickened liquids, etc.)
- Tube feeding
- Weight management (calorie-controlled)

### **What documentation is needed?**

SFE Special Diet Form will need to be completed for special dietary requests. This form can be requested from your school food service director, or by emailing [HNSupport@sfellc.org](mailto:HNSupport@sfellc.org).

OR

Submit a physician's statement signed by a licensed physician (MD or OD).

The SFE Special Diet Form or the physician's statement must identify:

- The child's disability;
- An explanation of why the disability restricts the child's diet;
- The major life activity affected by the disability;

The food(s) to be omitted from the child's diet and the food or choice of foods that must be substituted;

## What the school food service department will provide

The school food service department will accommodate all substitutions or modifications as identified by a licensed physician in the SFE Special Diet Form or a physician's statement. The following are examples of what the school will provide:

- Dietary supplements (tube feeding formulas & other nutritional formulas).
- Substitution foods (gluten free, low protein, etc.).
- Food service staff will be trained on optimum handling of special diet modifications. Communication between food service department, school nurse, registered dietitian, physician and parent or guardian regarding your child's school meals.

## What if my child has special dietary needs, but not a disability?

Schools are not required to make modifications to meals for students with special dietary needs that are not considered a disability. This includes modifications based on food choices of a family or child regarding a healthful diet. This provision covers those

children who have food intolerances or allergies but do not have life-threatening reactions (anaphylactic reactions) when exposed to the food(s) to which they are allergic.

Children without disabilities, but with special dietary needs requiring food substitutions or modifications, may request that the school food service meet their special nutrition needs. However, it is up to the individual school and/or school district as to whether requests are accommodated.

[Have more questions on special dietary needs?](#)

Contact SFE's Health & Nutrition Department to speak with a Registered Dietitian:

Email: [HNSupport@sfellc.org](mailto:HNSupport@sfellc.org) | Phone: (480) 551-6550