

# Meal Substitutions

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## **Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs**

### Children with disabilities

USDA regulations 7 CFR Part 15b require substitutions or modifications in school meals for **children who are disabled** and whose disability restricts their diet.

Disability is defined in:

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

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

A **disability determination** and special dietary requests can only be made by a **licensed physician**.

Meal modifications for disabled children require a **statement signed by a licensed physician**.

Physician statements should include:

- What the disability is
- How it restricts the diet
- Major life activity affected
- Foods to be omitted
- Foods to be substituted

Food related disabilities include diabetes, PKU, and life-threatening food allergies. Other special needs may include texture modifications and tube feeding.

The Individualized Education Program or **IEP** means a written statement for a child with a disability. The IEP contains the program of special education and related services to be provided to a child under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA).

Children who are **not disabled** but have special dietary needs

Accommodation **MAY** be made but is **NOT** required for children who do not have a disability.

Each special dietary request must be supported by a **medical statement** which is signed by a **recognized medical authority**.

The recognized medical authorities in Tennessee are the physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, chiropractor, doctor of osteopathy, dentist, and podiatrist.

The medical statement must include:

- An identification of the medical or other special dietary condition which restricts the child's diet;
- The food or foods to be omitted from the child's diet; and
- The food or choice of foods to be substituted.

## **School Food Service Responsibilities for Accommodating Children with Special Needs**

- School food service staff **must** make food substitutions or modifications for students with disabilities.
- Substitutions or modifications for children with disabilities must be based on a prescription written by a licensed physician.
- The school food service is encouraged, but not required, to provide food substitutions or modifications for children without disabilities with medically certified special dietary needs who are unable to eat regular meals as prepared.
- Substitutions for children without disabilities, with medically certified special dietary needs must be based on a statement by a recognized medical authority.
- Diet Prescriptions should be kept on file in the school cafeteria.
- Diet Prescriptions do not need to be renewed on an annual basis; however, schools are encouraged to ensure that the diet order reflect the current needs of the child.
- Under no circumstances is the school food service staff to revise or change a diet prescription or medical order.
- For USDA's basic guidelines on meal substitutions, refer to the *Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs* manual.

The manual can be found on the web at [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd).

## **Food Allergies**

Food allergies may result in severe, life-threatening (anaphylactic) reactions. When the physician's assessment regards food allergy reactions as severe or life-threatening, the substitutions prescribed by the physician must be made.

Generally, children with food allergies or intolerances do not have a disability as defined under 7CFR 15b.3 of USDA's nondiscrimination regulations. School food authorities may, but are not required to, make substitutions for them.

## **Funding Sources**

Meals must be served free or at a reduced price to children who qualify for free or reduced price benefits regardless of whether or not they have a disability.

Schools may not charge children with certified special dietary needs who require food modifications more than they charge other children.

When the school food service has difficulty covering the additional cost of special meals, there are several alternative sources of funding. These sources include: School system's general fund, *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, Maternal and Child Health, Parent Teacher Associations, and local civic organizations.

## EATING AND FEEDING EVALUATION: CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Name of School	Grade Level	Classroom
Does the child have a disability? If Yes, describe the major life activities affected by the <b>disability</b> .	Yes	No
Does the child have special nutritional or feeding needs? If Yes, complete the remainder of the form and have it <b><u>signed by a licensed physician</u></b> .	Yes	No
If the child is <b>not disabled</b> , does the child have special nutritional or feeding needs? If Yes, complete the remainder of the form and have it <b><u>signed by a recognized medical authority</u></b> .	Yes	No
If the child does not require special meals, the parent can sign at the bottom and return the form to the school food service.		
List any dietary restrictions or special diet.		
Student's Name	Age	
List any allergies or food intolerances to avoid.		
List foods to be substituted.		
List foods that need the following change in texture. If all foods need to be prepared in this manner, indicate "All."  Cut up or chopped into bite size pieces:  Finely ground:  Pureed:		
List any special equipment or utensils that are needed.		
Indicate any other comments about the child's eating or feeding patterns.		
Parent's Signature	Date:	
Physician or Medical Authority's Signature	Date:	