

Summary of Requirements for Accommodating Special Diets in Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Child Care Programs

This document summarizes the requirements for meal accommodations for children in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) [CACFP](#) child care facilities, which include child care centers, at-risk afterschool care centers), emergency shelters, and family day care homes. The USDA regulations require reasonable accommodations for children whose disability restricts their diet, based on a written medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority.

Under the [Americans with Disabilities \(ADA\) Amendment Act of 2008](#), most physical and mental impairments will constitute a disability. This includes conditions that impair immune, digestive, neurological, and bowel functions, as well as many others. A physical or mental impairment does not need to be life threatening to constitute a disability. It is sufficient that it limits a major life activity. For example, a child whose digestion is impaired by a food intolerance (such as lactose intolerance or gluten intolerance) may be a person with a disability, regardless of whether consuming the food causes the child severe distress. All disability considerations must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The USDA does not require meal accommodations for religious or moral convictions, personal preference, or general health concerns. For example, a parent's preference that a child eats a gluten-free diet or organic foods because the parent believes it is healthier for the child does not meet the definition of disability, and does not require a modification. CACFP facilities may choose to make accommodations for participants without disabilities on a case-by-case basis. All meal modifications for children without disabilities must comply with the [CACFP meal patterns](#). For information on the requirements for meal modifications, see the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) guide, [Accommodating Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs](#).

Scenario	Determination of disability	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions ¹	Modification required?	Required documentation	What medical statement must include
Child is determined to have a disability (physical or mental impairment) under Section 504, and the disability restricts the child's diet	Section 504 meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 504 plan and Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP) • May also have an Emergency Care Plan (ECP) depending on child's medical condition 	Medical conditions that substantially limit a major life activity and affect the child's diet, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • metabolic diseases, such as diabetes or phenylketonuria (PKU) • food anaphylaxis (life-threatening food allergy) 	Yes	Medical statement signed by recognized medical authority ^{2,3}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how the child's physical or mental impairment restricts the child's diet • An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child • The food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate

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Child is determined to have a disability (physical or mental impairment) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the disability restricts the child's diet	Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualized Education Program (IEP) and IHCP May also have an ECP depending on child's medical condition 	<p>Medical conditions that meet the IDEA recognized disability categories, require related services under IDEA, and affect the child's diet, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> autism traumatic brain injury other health impairment, e.g., heart condition and diabetes 	Yes	Medical statement signed by recognized medical authority ^{2,3}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about how the child's physical or mental impairment restricts the child's diet An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child The food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate
<p>Child is not determined to have a disability (physical or mental impairment) under Section 504 or IDEA, but the child's medical condition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets the definition of disability under the ADA Amendments Act; and the disability restricts the child's diet 	Recognized medical authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IHCP May also have an ECP depending on child's medical condition 	<p>Medical conditions that do not qualify for a disability under Section 504 or IDEA, but may meet the definition of disability under the ADA Amendments Act (any condition that substantially limits a child's major life activity), for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> celiac disease gluten intolerance lactose intolerance ⁴ non-life-threatening food allergies obesity certain temporary disabilities <p>Note: Not all conditions require meal accommodations for all children. ¹</p>	Yes	Medical statement signed by recognized medical authority ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about how the child's physical or mental impairment restricts the child's diet An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child The food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate

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Scenario	Determination of disability	Plan on file	Examples of medical conditions ¹	Modification required?	Required documentation	What medical statement must include
Personal Food Preferences	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	No ⁵	Not applicable	Not applicable
Vegetarianism	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	No ⁵	Not applicable	Not applicable
Religion	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	No ⁵	Not applicable	Not applicable

- ¹ These examples of medical conditions are not all-inclusive and may not require meal accommodations for all children. The determination of whether a child has a physical or mental impairment that restricts their diet must be made on a case-by-case basis.
- ² Recognized medical authorities include physicians, physician assistants, doctors of osteopathy, and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs). The CSDE's [Medical Statement for Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) applies to requests for meal accommodations for children participating in CACFP child care centers and family day care homes.
- ³ If the child's Section 504 plan or IEP includes the same information required in the medical statement, or if the required information is obtained by the CACFP facility during the development or review of the Section 504 plan or IEP, a separate medical statement is not required.
- ⁴ CACFP facilities can choose to provide lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk (unflavored whole milk for ages 1; unflavored low-fat (1%) milk or unflavored fat-free milk for ages 2-5; and unflavored low-fat milk, unflavored fat-free milk, or flavored fat-free milk for ages 6 and older) without a medical statement. CACFP facilities can also choose to provide one or more nondairy milk substitutes that meet the USDA nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes, such as certain brands of soy milk. Nondairy milk substitutes require a written request from a parent or guardian, but they do not require a medical statement. The written request must identify the special dietary need that restricts the participant's diet, and the requested allowable milk substitute. For more information, see the CSDE's handout, [Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in the CACFP](#).
- ⁵ USDA regulations do not require meal modifications for participants without disabilities, such as religion, personal preference, or general health concerns. CACFP facilities can choose to make these accommodations on a case-by-case basis. All meal modifications for children without disabilities must comply with the CACFP meal patterns. For more information, see the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Summary of Requirements for Accommodating Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs

Resources

Accommodating Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs:

<http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/NPGspdiet.pdf>

Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in the CACFP: [http://portal.ct.gov/-](http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/CACFPmilksub.pdf)

[/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/CACFPmilksub.pdf](http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/CACFPmilksub.pdf)

CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 2C-18 and 2H-18: Requirements for Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs:

http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Memos/OM2018/OM02C18_02H18.pdf

Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs:

<http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Medical Statement for Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs:

<http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/MedicalCACFP.pdf>

Guidance and Instructions: Medical Statement for Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs:

<http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/MedicalCACFPinstr.pdf>

Requirements for Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE Presentation):

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/CACFPspecialDietsPresentation.pdf>

Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs:

<http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs:

<http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

USDA Memo CACFP 14-2017 SFSP 10-2017: Modifications to Accommodate Disabilities in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/modifications-accommodate-disabilities-cacfp-and-sfsp>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage or contact the [CACFP staff](#) the CSDE Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This handout is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/SpDietChartCACFP.pdf>

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Levy Gillespie, Equal Employment Opportunity Director/Americans with Disabilities Coordinator (ADA), Connecticut State Department of Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 607, Hartford, CT 06103, 860-807-2071, levy.gillespie@ct.gov.