

## MEAL MODIFICATION POLICY

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) nondiscrimination regulation (7 CFR 15b), as well as the regulations governing the Child Nutrition Programs, are clear that substitutions to the regular meal must be made, at no extra cost, for children who are unable to eat meals served in any Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) because of their disabilities. The ADA Amendments Act articulates that most physical and mental impairments constitute a disability.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance within the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, as well as provide procedural guidance for individuals who require meal modifications.

### Modifications Within the Meal Pattern

If a meal modification for a child's disability can be made within the Child Nutrition Program meal pattern, a medical statement is not necessary, and the Food Service Department is not required to obtain a medical statement.

### Modifications Outside of the Meal Pattern

If a student's disability requires a modification outside the meal pattern, the request needs to be supported by a medical statement signed by a State licensed healthcare professional.

The School Nutrition Department will use the Department of Elementary and Secondary Educations' Meal Modification Request Form.

The medical statement must include:

- Information about the child's physical or mental impairment that is sufficient to allow the School Nutrition Department to understand how it restricts the child's diet,
- An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child's disability, and
- The food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, in the case of a modified meal.

The Food Service Department may not require the written medical statement to provide a specific diagnosis by name or use the term "disabled" or "disability," though the State licensed healthcare professional may use these terms when submitting a medical statement.

If the child's IEP or 504 Plan includes the information required in the medical statement, or if written medical verification of the impairment during the IEP/504 Plan process is obtained, it is not necessary for the Food Service Department to also obtain a separate medical statement.

### Serving Meals in an Integrated Setting

The School Nutrition Department will work with School Administration to provide all meal services in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the disabled participant. Exclusion of any participant from the Program environment is not considered an appropriate or reasonable modification.

### Communications

If a student has a disability that requires a meal modification, the first point of contact will be the Nurse at the school the student attends. The School Nurse will collaborate with the Food Service Department, and any other relevant school officials, to determine the best support based upon the student's disability, age/level of independence.

This Policy & the DESE Meal Modification Request Form shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year.

Methods of notification will include:

- Program website / social media
- Parent and student handbooks
- Direct communication to households

[Reference: 7 CFR Part 15b - NONDISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF HANDICAP IN PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES RECEIVING FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE; USDA Memo SP 59-2016: Policy Memorandum on Modifications to Accommodate Disabilities in the School Meal Programs; 34 CFR 99.31 - Under what conditions is prior consent not required to disclose information?]