**OSPI Child Nutrition Programs**

**Reference Sheet**

**Special Dietary Needs**

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:
  - Medical Doctor (MD)
  - Doctor of Osteopathy (DO)
  - Physician’s Assistant (PA) with prescriptive authority
  - Naturopathic Physician
  - Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP)

- 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
  - 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
- Coordinate with the school district’s Section 504 Coordinator to ensure compliance with any additional Section 504 requirements

✔ 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

✔ 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
- 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
- SP59-2016
- Title 18 RCW – Businesses and Professionals

Acronym Reference
- CNS Child Nutrition Services
- OSPI Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- USDA United States Department of Agriculture