

Requesting Meal Accommodations

This handout contains guidance for Section 504/ADA Coordinators or families seeking to request **meal accommodations or modifications** from an organization operating Child Nutrition Programs through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), or Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Definitions of **bolded texts** are listed on the back of this handout.

Requirements:

Federal regulations require **sponsoring organizations** (school districts, child care centers, non-profit or for-profit programs) operating Child Nutrition Programs to make **reasonable modifications** to the standard meal requirements to accommodate participants with **disabilities**. This may include providing food substitutions, exclusions, texture modifications, or meal service accommodations at no extra charge.

Medical meal accommodations and modifications are only required to be accommodated by a sponsoring organization when requests are supported by a completed **Medical Statement** that is signed by a **State Licensed Health Care Professional** or Registered Dietitian. A written note with the following information can be used in lieu of a Medical Statement:

1. The participant's major life activity or major bodily function affected by the physical or mental impairment restricting the diet
2. An explanation of what needs to be done to accommodate the disability
3. The food(s) to be omitted from the participant's diet or other dietary accommodations to be made
4. The food(s) to be substituted when items are omitted from the diet

Organizations may choose to accommodate the request prior to receiving the completed Medical Statement, but must receive information as listed in #1-4 above in a verbal or written format. The organization will provide a date when the Medical Statement or written statement from a State Licensed Health Care Professional or Registered Dietitian must be submitted in order to continue receiving the modified meals.

Organizations may choose to accommodate **non-medical meal accommodations** such as requests for modifications due to cultural, religious, lifestyle, or personal preferences. Accommodation is not required by Federal regulations and will be determined based on each organization's policies. If you are seeking a non-medical meal accommodation, ask your organization about their policy. If the organization chooses to accommodate non-medical food preferences, the parent/guardian or adult participant may be asked to complete a **Meal Preference Request Form**.

Common Requests:

Milk Intolerances/Preferences: Fluid milk is a required component of Child Nutrition Programs at Breakfast, Lunch, and Supper. A **Nutritionally Equivalent Milk Substitute** may be requested if a participant is intolerant or prefers an alternative to the milk served. The organization must accommodate when requests are supported by a Medical Statement. Requests supported by a Meal Preference Request Form is subject to the organization's policy on non-medical food preferences.

Food Allergies: Many food allergies qualify as a disability that affects a major bodily function. In these cases, a **Medical Statement** may be required in order for modification requests to be accommodated.

Definitions:

Sponsoring Organization: A school district, child care center, non-profit or for-profit organization that elects to operate a federal Child Nutrition Program such as the NSLP, SBP, or CACFP. The sponsoring organization is also known as a sponsor. Sponsors receive reimbursements from the Oregon Department of Education for serving meals meeting the nutritional standards of each individual program.

Meal Accommodations/Modifications: A request to alter the standard menu served by an organization on a Child Nutrition Program. This can include food substitutions, exclusions, texture modifications, or other alterations to the meal or meal service. Sponsoring Organizations are not allowed to charge additional fees for any meal accommodations.

- **Reasonable Modifications:** These are changes in policies, practices, and/or procedures that will accommodate a participant's disabilities or medical needs. Organizations are required to make accommodations on a case-by-case basis in collaboration with parents/guardians or adult participants. Modifications must accommodate the disability, but do not need to be an exact brand or item if alternatives could meet the required modifications.
- **Medical Meal Accommodations:** Changes to the standard menu as a result of medical needs and disabilities. Must be supported with a Medical Statement or written note from a state licensed healthcare professional.
- **Non-Medical Meal Accommodations:** Changes to the standard menu due to a personal preference, including cultural, religious, or lifestyle reasons. Accommodations will be dependent on the policy of the sponsoring organization. A Meal Preference Request Form may be required.

Disability: Defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 2008 as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities for an individual, or having a record of such impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.

Medical Statement: A form to request medical meal accommodations. This form can be requested from your Sponsoring Organization. The form must be signed by a State Licensed Health Care Professional or Registered Dietitian.

State Licensed Health Care Professionals: A health care professional who is licensed to sign prescriptions in the State of Oregon. It includes the following professions: Medical Doctors (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (DO), Doctor of Naturopathy (ND), Physician's Assistant (PA), Certified Nurse Practitioner (CNP) or Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD), Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS), and Doctor of Optometry (OD)

Meal Preference Request Form: A form to request non-medical accommodations, including requests for Nutritionally Equivalent Milk Substitutes. This form can be requested from your sponsoring organization. The form must be signed by a parent/guardian or an adult participant, as applicable.

Nutritionally Equivalent Milk Substitute: Non-dairy substitutes with nutritional equivalency to cow's milk as outlined in the National School Lunch Program regulations at 7 CFR 210.10(d)(3).

- Participants requiring non-nutritionally equivalent milk substitutes such as almond milk, rice milk, oat milk, or hemp milk for medical reasons will need to submit a completed Medical Statement. If a non-nutritionally equivalent milk substitute is requested for non-medical needs/personal preference, organizations can choose whether to accommodate based on their policy.

Resources:

Oregon Department of Education – [Child Nutrition Program's Meal Accommodations Page](#)