

Meal Accommodations Quick Guide Maine Child Nutrition Programs

Meal Accommodation: A change to the planned menu due to an individual’s special dietary needs.

Disability: A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities or bodily functions.

Required Meal Accommodations

Federal school nutrition regulations require sponsors to make reasonable modifications to meal requirements for students with disabilities when requested. Modifications are only required when supported by a completed Medical Statement.

The **Medical Statement is required and must be completed & signed by a Licensed Physician or Registered Dietitian**. The written note must identify:

1. The participant’s major life activity or 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; and,
4. The food(s) that must be substituted when items are omitted from the diet.

Medical Statements do not need to reference a disability, and Sponsors do not need to determine if the participant has a disability. This is determined by a licensed physician.

The modification must be reasonable. It does not have to be the exact modification requested but

does need to be appropriate. This is determined on a case-by-case basis in collaboration with the parent/guardian, student and school nutrition program. No extra charge is allowed.

Licensed Physician includes Medical Doctors (MD), Doctor of Osteopathy (DO), Physician’s Assistant (PA), and Nurse Practitioner.

Milk Substitution Requests

A sponsor **may** choose to make substitutions for students who request a fluid milk substitute. The substitution **must be nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk**. *Non-dairy beverages that are not nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk, Juice and water are NOT allowable substitutions.*

Participants must provide the sponsor with a signed milk substitution request from a parent/guardian or recognized medical authority.

Nutrient Requirements for Fluid Milk Substitutes	
Nutrient	Per Cup (8 fluid oz)
Calcium	276 mg
Protein	8 g
Vitamin A	150 mcg RAE
Vitamin D	2.5 mcg
Magnesium	24 mg
Phosphorus	222 mg
Potassium	349 mg
Riboflavin	0.44 mg
Vitamin B-12	1.1 mcg

Non-Medical Requests

Sponsors **may** choose to make meal modifications for students who do not have a disability, however the accommodation must still meet meal pattern regulations.

USDA Meal Reimbursement

Meal accommodations supported by a completed Medical Statement are reimbursable at the standard meal reimbursement rate. Meal preference requests that do not meet program requirements are not reimbursable. While any additional costs for substituted foods are considered allowable program costs, no additional Child Nutrition Program reimbursement is available.

Communication & Documentation

Communication between the sponsor, student, and parent/guardian is key to ensuring reasonable accommodations are made for participants with disabilities. This includes balancing the safety of the student with inclusion when considering “allergy-free” seating arrangements.

Keep all documentation on file including the medical statement and notes from conversations.