

# Standard Operating Procedure: Special Diets

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## REGULATION BACKGROUND

The USDA nondiscrimination regulation, as well as the regulations governing the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, state the substitutions to the regular meal must be made for children who are unable to eat school meals because of their disabilities when that need is certified by a State licensed health care professional who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under State law.

When nutrition services are required under a child's IEP, school officials need to make sure that child nutrition staff are involved early on in decisions regarding special meals. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the written document that contains the program of special education and related services to be provided to a child with a disability covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In most cases, children with disabilities can be accommodated with little extra expense or involvement. Child Nutrition Services and the School Health Office have collaborated to devise a procedure for ordering special dietary modifications for students. This procedure was developed to insure that students receive adequate nutrition and schools have the equipment and supplies necessary to meet their needs.

## I. REQUEST FORMS: SPECIAL DIETS

### A. MEDICAL STATEMENT FORM (Special Diet Form)

1. In accordance with USDA's regulations for "substitutions or diet modifications in school meals for children whose disabilities restrict their diet, all diets orders must reflect the current dietary needs of the child." Therefore, medical statements must be renewed on a yearly basis, even if the diet order has not changed.
2. All requests for special dietary modifications should begin with the school nurse.
3. At the beginning of the school, based on parent/guardian disclosure of dietary restrictions and/or modifications the nurse may either provide the Medical Statement Form or refer parent to LHUSD website (<https://www.lhUSD.org>, then select Child Nutrition Services from the Departments menu).
4. Once parent/guardian has returned with the completed form, the school nurse will contact Child Nutrition Services.
5. If the parents/guardian cannot provide a current statement, a special diet shall not be provided.

### B. PHYSICIAN'S STATEMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

1. USDA regulations 7 CFR Part 15b require substitutions or modifications in school meals for children whose disabilities restrict their diets.
2. When food allergies result in severe, life threatening (anaphylactic) reactions, the child's condition would meet the definitions of "disability".

3. A child with a disability must be provided substitutions in foods when that need is supported by a statement signed by a licensed medical practitioner.
4. The **medical practitioner's statement must identify:**
  - a. The child's disability;
  - b. An explanation of why the disability restricts the child's diet;
  - c. The major life activity affected by the disability;
  - d. The food(s) to omitted from the child's diet, and the food or choice of foods that must be substituted;
  - e. Specific substitutions needed must be specified in a statement signed by a licensed medical practitioner.
5. This documentation is required to justify that the modified meal is "reimbursable", as defined by federal guidelines, and to ensure any meal modifications meet nutrition standards that are medically appropriate for the student.

C. REVIEWING MEDICAL STATEMENT

1. Once diet is received by the Child Nutrition Department it is immediately sent to the Taher Corporate Dietitian to be formulated within no more than 10 days; highly sensitive and restrictive diets may take longer to ensure an appropriate menu is selected/developed.
  - a. Parent/Guardian is to make arrangements to ensure student is provided meals from home during this time.
  - b. Cafeteria managers cannot make menu modifications without Child Nutrition Supervisor and/or Food Service Directors consultation; therefore, in the best interest of the student that they bring their own sack breakfast/lunch.
2. Once reviewed by the Dietitian, the special diet will be reviewed on a one-to-one basis with the kitchen manager, food service director and/or child nutrition supervisor.
3. Manger will then take a copy of the special diet to keep on file in her/his kitchen office.
4. Copy of medical statement will be kept on file in FSMC office.

D. FOLLOWING MEDICAL STATEMENT/DIET PRESCRIPTION

1. CN staff shall make food substitutions or accommodations for students with those disabilities as specifically written in the special diet order form.
2. Substitutions for students with disabilities shall be based on a prescription written by a state licensed medical practitioner.
3. Under no circumstances is school CNP staff to interpret, revise, or change a diet prescription or medical order.
4. When uncertainty arises or the diet cannot be located, the manger shall notify the food service director and/or child nutrition supervisor so they may consult with dietitian so that diet plan may be formulated.
5. Best Practice: School nurse is to print out school menu for parent/guardian to review and take to physician to specify items to be omitted.
6. If a student has a **milk allergy**, soy milk will be substituted for regular cow's milk.
  - a. Water and juice may **NOT** be substituted for cow's milk.

7. **Summer Feeding Program:** If a student is attending the district's Summer Feeding Program the parent/guardian must notify the District Child Nutrition department prior to the first scheduled week.
  - a. Section C (Reviewing Medical Statement) steps will be followed when dietary order is received.

## II. CHILDREN WITHOUT DISABILITIES

- A. Children without disabilities, but with special dietary needs requiring food substitutions or modifications, may request that the school food service meet their special nutrition needs.
  1. The school food authority will decide these situations on a case-by-case basis.
  2. Documentation with accompanying information must be provided by a licensed medical practitioner.
  3. While school food authorities are encouraged to consult with the licensed medical practitioner, where appropriate, schools are not required to make modifications to meals based on food choices of a family or child regarding a healthful diet.
  4. This provision covers those children who have food intolerances or allergies but do not have life threatening reactions when exposed to the food (s) to which they are allergic.

## III. SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. FSMC Director/Child Nutrition Supervisor/Dietitian's Responsibility

- Keep a log/file in FSMC office that includes student name, campus, allergy/diagnosis etc.
- Include all documentations provided regarding special diet and medical notes, phone conversations/clarifications regarding diet.
- Review all menu item ingredients for allergens
- Provide nutrition education to cafeteria managers regarding special diets.
- Provide training to school nurses regarding CNS procedures on special diets.
- Verify and confirm with medical practitioner, nurse, and/or parent as needed regarding orders.
- Input special instructions onto student account via POS system; update annually and/or as needed.

### B. Manager's Responsibility

- Cafeteria managers **cannot** make menu modifications without FSMC Director/Child Nutrition Supervisor/Dietitian consultation.
- Make the necessary food substitutions or accommodations for students with those disabilities as specifically outline in the special diet order for.
- Meet with FSMC director/Child Nutrition Supervisor, one-to-one, to review diet restrictions.
- Review menu with her/his kitchen staff.

### C. Nurse's Responsibility

- Provide parent with medical statement form
- Assist in educating parent/guardian on CNS special diet procedures
- Turn in medical statement (special diet form) only if completed in its entirety to Child Nutrition Services.

**D. Parent/Guardian's Responsibility**

Obtain medical statement form (special diet request) from school nurse or LHUSD website (<https://www.lhusd.org>, then select Child Nutrition Services from the Departments menu).

- Return all completed forms in their entirety back to school nurse.
- Provide sack lunch/breakfast until special accommodations are made.
- Provide updated forms annually even if special accommodations remained the same as the previous year.