

Special Needs Meals in the CCFP

Children with disabilities:

Child care providers are required to provide food component substitutions for individual children who have a disability. A disability means any person who has a documented physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Examples of disabilities may include: orthopedic, visual, speech, and hearing impairments; cerebral palsy; epilepsy; muscular dystrophy; multiple sclerosis; cancer; heart disease; metabolic diseases, such as diabetes or phenylketonuria (PKU); and food anaphylaxis (life threatening food allergy). Reading food labels for life threatening food allergen warnings and ingredients is vital. Meals must provide the substitutions or modifications to the meal patterns as specified on the medical statement to be reimbursable.

A parent/guardian may supply one or more components of the reimbursable meal as long as the institution/facility provides at least one required meal component.

What is required?

A medical statement is required and must include:

- Medical need for substitution(s).
- Food(s) to be omitted and the food(s) to be substituted.
- Signature of a licensed physician, a physician's assistant (PA), or an advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP).

Sponsors or child care facilities are encouraged to contact the nutrition section at the state office for assistance with dietary restrictions for children with disabilities.

Children who cannot drink *fluid milk:

Child care providers or parents may provide a non-dairy beverage (e.g. soy milk) that is nutritionally equivalent to the fluid milk component of the meal pattern for children with milk allergies (non-life threatening) or intolerances.

For the meal to be reimbursable, the beverage must be listed on the current CCFP *Approved Milk Substitution List for Children Ages 1 and Older* on our website under Nutrition and Menu Planning/Special Dietary Needs at: www.flhealth.gov/ccfp/

What is required?

- A letter from the parent/guardian requesting a nutritionally equivalent milk substitute (e.g. soy milk) is required if no medical statement is on file. The letter must state the medical or special dietary condition and whether the parent/guardian will provide the milk substitute or the center.
- If parent/guardian prefers to provide the milk substitute, it must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name.
- A medical statement is not required, however if provided, it must identify the medical or special dietary need for the milk substitute, the requested (or provided) nutritionally equivalent milk substitute, and signature of a recognized medical authority.

**Please note the following fluid milks do not require a parent or medical statement: Cow or goat milk; breastmilk; lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk; UHT (Ultra High Temperature); acidified; cultured; organic milk.*

Children with special dietary conditions (not including disabilities):

Child care providers are encouraged but not required to provide food component substitutions for individual children who do not have a disability, but who have a special medical or dietary need. Examples of medical or special dietary conditions may include food allergies (non-life threatening) and food intolerances such as wheat, fish, milk proteins and eggs. Reading food labels for allergen warnings and ingredients is very important.

A parent/guardian may supply one component of the reimbursable meal as long as it is creditable and the institution/facility provides all other required meal components.

Meals with substitutions that meet all meal pattern requirements are reimbursable. For example, the child care provider can substitute chicken for fish or bananas for oranges. A medical statement is *not needed* in this case; however a parent note should be on file.

When substitutions are made and the meal pattern is not met, a medical statement *is required*. In this situation, the medical statement must include the following:

What is required?

A medical statement is required and must include:

- Medical need for substitution(s).
- Food(s) to be omitted and the food(s) to be substituted.
- Signature of a recognized medical authority (such as: physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, or registered dietitian).

Sponsors or child care facilities are encouraged to contact the nutrition section at the state office for assistance with dietary restrictions for children with special dietary conditions.

Food substitutions related to religious preference or vegetarianism:

No medical statement is needed; a note from the parent/guardian should be on file. Meals with substitutions that meet all food component requirements of the meal pattern are reimbursable. For example, the child care provider can substitute meat alternates for a child who does not eat meat. Contact the state office for assistance if an entire food component is eliminated from a meal, such as an instance where milk cannot be served with a meal containing meat.