

# Special Needs Meals in the CCFP

## **Children with disabilities:**

Child care providers must make reasonable modifications to meals to accommodate disabilities which restrict a child's diet. A disability means any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more "major life activities." "Major life activities" include eating, digestion, and feeding skills. A physical or mental impairment does not need to be life threatening to constitute a disability. Examples of a disability may include diabetes, food allergy/intolerance, developmental delay, or autism.

Meals with substitutions that meet all meal pattern requirements are reimbursable. For example, the child care provider can substitute lactose-free milk in place of "regular" cow's milk or substitute 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 is required. In this situation, the medical statement must include the following:

- Description of the child's physical or mental impairment that restricts diet.
- An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the disability, e.g., listing food(s) to be omitted and the food(s) to be substituted or any necessary adaptive feeding equipment.
- Signature of a licensed physician, a physician's assistant (PA), or an advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP).

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.

## **Dietary preference:**

Meals with substitutions that meet all food component requirements of the meal pattern are reimbursable. No medical statement is needed; a note from the parent/guardian should be on file. For example, the child care provider can substitute meat alternates for a child who does not eat meat due to religious preference or vegetarianism.

## **Milk substitutions:**

### Soy 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 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 the CCFP website under Nutrition and Menu Planning/Special Dietary Needs at: [www.flhealth.gov/ccfp/](http://www.flhealth.gov/ccfp/)

The following must be maintained on file:

- 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 whether the parent/guardian or the center will provide the milk substitute.

If parent/guardian prefers to provide the approved soy milk, it must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name.

### All other milk substitutes (e.g., almond milk, rice milk, coconut milk):

These milks are not nutritionally equivalent to fluid cow's milk and require a medical statement.

*Sponsors and child care facilities are encouraged to contact the nutrition section at the state office at 850-245-4323 for assistance with disabilities or dietary preferences.*