

## Special Dietary Needs

# Meal Modifications Due to Disability

The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 made important changes to the term “disability” to include any person with a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities, including major bodily functions. Most physical and mental impairments will constitute a disability; it does not need to be life-threatening.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture requires programs to make reasonable modifications to accommodate participants with disabilities to provide equal opportunity to participate. Examples of a disability may include diabetes, food allergy or intolerance, developmental delay, or autism.

### Required Documentation: Medical Statement

A valid **medical statement** is required when the special diet request results in a meal or snack that **does not meet meal pattern requirements**.

It **must** be completed and signed by a Florida licensed healthcare professional, defined as a physician, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, or a registered dietitian.

It **must** include the following information:

- **Explanation of how the physical/mental impairment restricts diet**
- **Foods to omit and foods to be substituted and/or any necessary adaptive feeding equipment**
- **Signature of licensed physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or registered dietitian**

### What is a Reasonable Modification? (with a valid medical statement)

- Modification provided does not have to be a specific brand names requested; nor does the meal need to be different each day.
- There is no need to mirror items being substituted, e.g., lasagna on the menu does not mean you must serve a gluten free version to a child with an allergy or intolerance to gluten.
- Meal or snack provided should attempt to follow the meal pattern, but it is not required.
- Parent or guardian may **never** be required to provide the accommodation; if desired, they may provide all but one meal component (supplied by provider).
- Children receiving a meal modification **must not** be separated from others at mealtime.
- Seek clarification if Medical Statement is unclear.
- Provider may implement an accommodation before the completed Medical Statement is received to keep child safe. Meal pattern requirements must be met.

### Section 504 Coordinator and Grievance Procedure

CCFP contractors with staff of 15 or more must designate at least one person to coordinate compliance with disability requirements. This person must establish grievance procedures that incorporate appropriate due process standards and provide for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints.

**Responsibilities include** reviewing requests for meal modifications; determining what modification(s) will be provided; ensuring proper documentation is received; and communicating with parents or guardians for clarification on meal modification(s) to best accommodate a child’s disability.