

Self-assessment of Local Practices for Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs

This tool is intended to help local educational agencies (LEAs) assess current practices for accommodating special diets in school meals and identify areas in need of improvement. For information on the requirements for meal modifications for children with special dietary needs, see the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) guide, *Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs*.

Step 1 — Assessment. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether each recommendation is fully implemented, partially implemented, or not implemented by the LEA. Refer to the LEA’s policies, guidelines, and procedures for special diets, and the LEA’s food allergy management plan.

Federal and state requirements	Implementation			
	Full	Partial	None	Don't know
1. The LEA follows all federal and state requirements for accommodating children with special dietary needs, including the Connecticut General Statutes (Section 10-212c), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) school meals regulations (7 CFR 210 and 7 CFR 220) and nondiscrimination regulations (7 CFR 15b), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the ADA Amendments Act , and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).				
2. The LEA makes meal modifications on a case-by-case basis for students whose disability restricts their diet, based on the prescription in the medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority, i.e., physician, physician assistant, doctor of osteopathy, or advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). The medical statement identifies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the child’s physical or mental impairment restricts the child’s diet; • an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the child; and • the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate. <p>Note: The CSDE’s form, Medical Statement for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs, is available on the CSDE’s Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage.</p>				
3. For students without a disability that restricts their diet (such as religion, personal preference, or general health concerns), the LEA makes modifications to school meals on a case-by-case basis. Note: LEAs can choose, but are not required, to make these accommodations.				
4. Modified meals for students without a disability comply with the USDA meal patterns for school nutrition programs. For more information, visit the CSDE’s Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs and Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs webpages.				
5. The LEA maintains medical statements on file for students requiring meal accommodations due to disabilities or other special medical needs.				
6. School food service personnel take the necessary steps to prevent overt identification of students with special dietary needs.				
7. The LEA takes appropriate precautions to prepare and serve safe meals for children with food allergies. Procedures are in place to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a food allergy action plan for each child with life-threatening food allergies; • check ingredients labels for all foods served to children with food allergies; • designate an area in the kitchen for allergy-free meals and use separate equipment and utensils during preparation, cooking, and serving; • develop cleaning procedures that avoid cross-contamination; and • as required by C.G.S. Section 10-212a, provide annual and ongoing training for staff, including management of students with life-threatening food allergies and administration of epinephrine autoinjectors. 				

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Team	Implementation			
	Full	Partial	None	Don't know
8. The LEA includes an interdisciplinary team of appropriate personnel in the planning and implementation of meal accommodations, such as school food service personnel, school administrators, school medical personnel, Section 504 team members, school dietitians, and other school staff with relevant experience.				
9. The team develops and communicates the LEA's policy and procedures to address issues meal accommodations for students with special dietary needs.				
Written policy and procedures	Full	Partial	None	Don't know
10. The LEA has a written procedural safeguards process that provides notice and information to parents and guardians regarding how to request a reasonable modification and their procedural rights for grievance procedures, as required by USDA regulations 7 CFR 15b.25 and 7 CFR 15b.6(b) . For more information, see the CSDE's guide, Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs .				
11. The LEA has a written plan for the management of life-threatening food allergies, as required by Section 10-212c of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.). For more information, see the CSDE's guide, Guidelines for Managing Life-threatening Food Allergies in Connecticut Schools .				
12. The LEA has a written policy addressing the requirements and procedures for special dietary accommodations in school nutrition programs. For more information, see the "What's Next" section of the CSDE's Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs webpage and the CSDE's guide, Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs .				
13. The LEA has written standard operating procedures (SOPs) for special dietary accommodations, e.g., procedures for preparing foods for special diets, cleaning procedures for preventing food allergen contamination, and training procedures for all staff, including substitutes. For more information, see the CSDE's guide, Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs .				
14. The LEA has written SOPs to ensure that school food service personnel, school health personnel, and other appropriate school staff members regularly communicate and collaborate regarding the planning and implementation of meal accommodations for students.				
15. The LEA has written SOPs for obtaining consultation services as needed from a registered dietitian or other recognized medical authority to plan meals for students with special dietary needs.				
16. The LEA has a written procedural safeguards process that provides notice and information to parents and guardians regarding how to request a reasonable modification and their procedural rights for grievance procedures, as required by USDA regulations 7 CFR 15b.25 and 7 CFR 15b.6(b) . For more information, see the CSDE's guide, Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs .				

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Communication and professional development (school food service)	Implementation			
	Full	Partial	None	Don't know
17. The food service department has a SOP for regularly communicating with all school food service personnel regarding the requirements for special diets, including the LEA's policies and procedures.				
18. The food service department has a SOP for regularly communicating with all school food service personnel regarding the individual needs of each student with special dietary requirements.				
19. School food service personnel receive professional development on special diets at least once each year.				
20. Professional development for school food service personnel includes training on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA requirements for meal modifications and medical statements; • types of special diets and required modifications for menus and recipes; • the use of the LEA's SOPs for special dietary accommodations; and • requirements for food service employees when providing special meals, such as allowable procedures and confidentiality requirements. 				
Communication and professional development (school health services)	Full	Partial	None	Don't know
21. School health services has a SOP for regularly communicating with all school nurses regarding the requirements for special diets, including the LEA's policies and SOPs.				
22. School health services has a SOP for regularly communicating with all school nurses regarding the individual needs of each student with special dietary needs.				
23. School nurses receive ongoing professional development on accommodating special diets.				
24. Professional development for school nurses includes training on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • federal requirements related to school meal accommodations, e.g., USDA, Section 504, IDEA, ADA, ADA Amendments Act, and FERPA; • medical diagnoses and management of special diets; and • using the LEA's SOPs for meal accommodations. 				
Communication and professional development (school personnel)	Full	Partial	None	Don't know
25. School health services and school food services have a SOP for regularly communicating with each other regarding the individual needs of each student with special dietary needs.				
26. The LEA has a SOP for regularly communicating with other appropriate school personnel as needed (e.g., cafeteria aides, teachers, teachers' aides, administrators, and other school staff), regarding the individual needs of each student with special dietary needs.				
27. School personnel (such as teachers, teacher's aides, and other school staff) receive professional development on special diets to increase awareness of the special dietary needs of the students in their care.				

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Communication and education (families)	Implementation			
	Full	Partial	None	Don't know
28. The LEA has a SOP to ensure communication with families regarding meal accommodations for students. This procedure addresses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • federal and state requirements for meal accommodations, including nondiscrimination laws (item 1), procedural safeguards (item 10), and food allergy management plan (item 11). • procedures for families to request meal accommodations, including appropriate completion of the medical statement; • procedures for obtaining nutrition information for school meals; and • responsibilities of schools, students, and families in managing special diets. 				
29. The food service department maintains current nutrition information for foods and beverages served in school meals, which is available to students, families, school nurses, and others as needed.				
30. Policies and procedures for meal accommodations are posted on the LEA’s website and shared with families through other means, such as displays, menu backs, newsletters, e-mails, parent and student handbooks, handouts at parent events, and public service announcements.				
31. As required by C.G.S. Section 10-212 , the LEA’s allergy management plan for students with life-threatening food allergies is available publicly via the district’s website, individual school’s website, or other appropriate means if a website does not exist.				
Monitoring and review	Full	Partial	None	Don't know
32. The LEA has monitoring procedures to ensure that each school consistently follows the LEA’s policies and SOPs for meal accommodations.				
33. The LEA has monitoring procedures to ensure that meal accommodations for special diets are appropriate and meet individual student needs.				
34. The LEA reviews procedures for meal accommodations at least annually and makes changes as needed.				

Step 2 — Prioritize Areas for Change. Review the areas rated “none” or “partial” and identify the priority areas for change in the LEA.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step 3 — Develop an action plan for each priority area. For more information, see the CSDE’s [Action Planning Form](#) and the CSDE’s sample completed action planning forms, *Action Planning Form Sample 1 – Developing District Policy for Accommodating Special Diets* and *Action Planning Form Sample 2 – Promoting District Policy for Accommodating Special Diet*.

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Resources

Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs (USDA):
<https://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/deps/nutrition/sdn/USDAspdietguide.pdf>

Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/SpecialDietsGuide.pdf>

Action Planning Form (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/actionplan.doc>

Action Planning Form Sample 1 – Developing District Policy for Accommodating Special Diets (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/SpDietActionPolicy.pdf>

Action Planning Form Sample 2 – Promoting District Policy for Accommodating Special Diet (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/SpDietActionPromote.pdf>

Allowable Milk Substitutes for Children without Disabilities in School Nutrition Programs:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/Milksub.pdf>

CSDE Operational Memorandum No. 13-17: Requirements for Meal Modifications in the School Nutrition Programs:
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/Memos/OM2017/OM13-17.pdf>

Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage): <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage): <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-Preschoolers-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Medical Statement for Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/MedicalStatementSNP.pdf>

Guidance and Instructions: Medical Statement for Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs: <http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/MedicalStatementSNPinstr.pdf>.

Guidance and Instructions: Medical Statement for Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/MedicalStatementSNPinstr.pdf>

Requirements for Meal Modifications in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE Presentation): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/SpecialDietsPresentation.pdf>

Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
<http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>

Summary of Requirements for Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE): <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/SpecialDietsChart.pdf>.

USDA Memo SP 59-2016: Policy Memorandum on Modifications to Accommodate Disabilities in the School Meal Programs:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/policy-memorandum-modifications-accommodate-disabilities-school-meal-programs>

USDA Memo SP 26-2017: Accommodating Disabilities in the School Meal Programs: Guidance and Questions and Answers (Q&As):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/accommodating-disabilities-school-meal-programs-guidance-and-qas>

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For more information, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage or contact the [school nutrition programs staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/SpecDiet/SpDietAssess.pdf>.

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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