

Accommodating Special Dietary Needs Scenario Summary Chart

Scenario	Determination of Disability	Examples of Medical Conditions ¹	Modification Required? ²	Required Documentation
Child has a disability that restricts their diet under Section 504	Section 504 meeting	Medical conditions that substantially limit a major life activity ³ and affect the child’s diet. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metabolic diseases, such as diabetes or phenylketonuria (PKU) • Food anaphylaxis (severe food allergy) 	Yes	Medical Statement for Meal Modification OR If medical statement requirements are written into 504 plan, no medical statement is required
Child has a disability that restricts their diet under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Planning and placement team meeting	Medical conditions that meet the IDEA recognized disability categories require related services under IDEA and affect the child’s diet. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traumatic brain injury • Other health impairment, i.e. heart condition, diabetes 	Yes	Medical Statement for Meal Modification OR If medical statement requirements are written into IEP, no medical statement is required
Child has a disability that restricts their diet according to a licensed physician but not through Section 504 or IDEA	Recognized medical authority, including physicians, physician assistants, or advanced practice nurses with prescriptive authority	Medical conditions that do not qualify for a disability under Section 504 or IDEA but are determined by the child’s physician, advanced practice nurse or physician assistant to be severe enough to be considered a disability	Yes	Medical Statement for Meal Modification

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Scenario	Determination of Disability	Examples of Medical Conditions ¹	Modification Required? ²	Required Documentation
Child does not have a disability under Section 504, IDEA but has a medical condition that restricts their diet	Recognized medical authority, including physicians, physician assistants, or advanced practice nurses with prescriptive authority	Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food allergy (not life threatening) • Food intolerances (including lactose intolerance⁴) • Overweight (not morbidly obese) • High blood cholesterol 	Yes	Medical Statement for Meal Modification OR If meal falls within meal pattern, parent has option to fill out Dietary Preference Form
Personal Food Preferences	Not applicable	Not applicable	No ⁵	Dietary Preference Form for Meal Modification, if district chooses to accommodate
Vegetarianism	Not applicable	Not applicable	No ⁵	Dietary Preference Form for Meal Modification, if district chooses to accommodate
Religion	Not applicable	Not applicable	No ⁶	Dietary Preference Form for Meal Modification, if district chooses to accommodate

¹ These examples are not all inclusive. Some medical conditions may apply to more than one scenario.

² The Colorado Department of Education Office of School Nutrition medical statements are available on the [Special Dietary Needs webpage](#).

³ Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), anything that substantially limits a major life activity constitutes a disability. The “categories of diseases and conditions” in the ADA are not all inclusive, meaning there are more conditions that meet the definition of a disability than are listed.

⁴ Schools can choose to provide low-fat (1%) or fat-free lactose-free or lactose-reduced milk without a medical statement. Schools can also choose to provide one or more nondairy milk substitutes (such as soy milk) that meet USDA nutrition standards for fluid milk substitutes. For more information, visit the [Special Dietary Needs webpage](#).

⁵ USDA regulations do not require schools to make modifications to meals based on food choices or the personal preferences of a family or child. However, schools may choose to accommodate these preferences by offering multiple meal choices and implementing Offer versus Serve (OVS). It is recommended parents fill out a Dietary Preference Form for Meal Modification should schools choose to accommodate these preferences.

⁶ USDA grants meal pattern exemptions based on religion only for entities (schools, institutions and sponsors), not individuals. Schools may choose to address individual needs by substituting different food items within the same component category of the USDA meal patterns, offering multiple meal choices and implementing OVS.

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