

- Programs are required to serve meals and snacks (including milk) that meet meal pattern requirements. This includes meals and snacks served to participants with **disabilities**.
- USDA requires Programs make reasonable modifications to accommodate participants with **disabilities** to provide equal opportunity to participate. This is required only when supported by a written medical statement from a physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

What is a disability?

Physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (includes eating, breathing, digestive and respiratory functions, etc.). Most physical and mental impairments will constitute a disability, it does not need to be life threatening.

Ex. Digestion is impaired by lactose intolerance, whether or not consuming milk causes severe distress.

What is NOT a disability?

Eating certain foods or eliminating foods from the diet due to a general health concern and/or preference.

Ex. Request that a participant does not drink cow's milk because of a preference, not because the participant has lactose intolerance.

Disability

Request is supported by a written medical statement

Program must accommodate* the participant by offering meals that meet the participant's needs

Meals accommodation(s) may or may not meet CACFP meal pattern requirements

Meals are reimbursable

Not a Disability

Request is *not* supported by a written medical statement

Programs *may choose* to accommodate if requests can be met within the CACFP meal pattern

Meal accommodation(s) **must** meet CACFP meal pattern requirements

Meals are reimbursable

***Making Accommodations:** Programs must offer a reasonable modification that effectively accommodates the participant's disability.

- Determinations for how to accommodate a participant must be made on a case by case basis.
- Saying 'no' to providing a modification is almost never appropriate.
- Programs are not required to provide the exact substitution or modification requested. For example, a program is not required to provide a particular brand name of a substitute, but must offer a substitute which does not contain the specific allergen that affects the participant.

Meals that do not meet CACFP meal pattern requirements are **not reimbursable** unless supported by a [medical statement](#).

Effectively accommodate ALL participants with the same type of disability: Programs may design a meal plan within the CACFP meal pattern to accommodate common disabilities. In many cases, disabilities can be managed within meal pattern requirements when a well-planned variety of foods is available. Examples:

- **Offer one type of lactose-free milk** to accommodate all participants with lactose intolerance. Because this modification effectively accommodates a participant with lactose intolerance, the program meets the requirement that it makes a reasonable accommodation.
- Have a variety of fruits on hand so a participant with an allergy to a particular fruit can be served a different fruit.

Medical Statement must include:

- Sufficient information about impairment and how it restricts the diet.
- Explanation of how to accommodate the condition (e.g. identify the food(s) that need to be omitted and recommend alternatives).
- If a medical statement is unclear or lacks sufficient detail, Programs must obtain clarification so that a proper and safe meal can be provided.

Examples of Medical Statements

ACCEPTABLE:	NOT ACCEPTABLE:
<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>CHILD HEATH REPORT</p> <p>Sean is lactose intolerant. He cannot drink cow's milk. He should be served almond milk.</p> <p><i>Dr. Dan Physician</i></p> </div>	<p>Does not describe impairment and how it restricts the diet</p> <div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>CHILD HEATH REPORT</p> <p>Mary does not drink milk. Serve her almond milk.</p> <p><i>Dr. Dan Physician</i></p> </div>

Participant cannot drink regular cow's milk:	
<p>If the reason is because of a disability supported by a written medical statement (from a physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant)</p>	<p>Your Program is required to make a reasonable modification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supply recommended alternative as indicated on the medical statement (i.e. specific item requested) or ➤ Supply an alternative product that excludes the particular allergen that affects the participant's diet.
<p>If the reason is not a disability supported by a written medical statement, but is a general health concern or personal preference</p>	<p>Your Program is not required to make a modification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your Program <i>may choose</i> to supply a <u>creditable</u> non-dairy milk substitute or allow the parent to supply a <u>creditable</u> non-dairy milk substitute. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A creditable non-dairy substitute is nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk. Currently only some soy milk products are creditable. ○ Documentation of the request, signed by the parent/guardian, must be on file. See Parent/Guardian Request for Non-Dairy Milk Substitution (GM12) for optional form that can be used and list of creditable substitutes.

Examples of other requests for general health concern/personal preference:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-dairy milk substitute <u>not nutritionally equivalent</u> to cow's milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Non-dairy milk substitutions <u>not nutritionally equivalent</u> to cow's milk are not creditable when served outside of accommodating a disability. These include cashew, rice and almond milk. ➤ When served, meals and snacks cannot be claimed for reimbursement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programs may choose to supply organic milk, thus serving a meal that meets CACFP meal pattern requirements. Meals and snacks can be claimed for reimbursement. ➤ When parents provide organic milk, meals and snacks cannot be claimed for reimbursement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetarian and religious reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programs may choose to supply a creditable food or beverage substitute, thus serving a meal that meets CACFP meal pattern requirements. Meals and snacks can be claimed for reimbursement. ➤ When parents provide any meal component, meals and snacks cannot be claimed for reimbursement.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Call or email your consultant when you have a question about special diet needs and requests

Special Dietary Needs and the CACFP

What to Do Next:

Designate Responsible Staff

- Designate staff responsible for managing all special dietary needs. This point person will ensure:
 - Documentation is on file for disabilities and participants' needs are met
 - All meals/snacks meet CACFP meal pattern requirements
 - Only creditable meals are claimed for reimbursement

Obtain Appropriate Documentation

- Medical statements for participants whose meals do not meet the CACFP meal pattern.
(Must be on file when a meal is missing a component, non-creditable food(s) are served or parent/guardian is supplying a component due to a disability).
- [Documentation](#) for participants being served a creditable non-dairy milk substitution for general health concerns or lifestyle choice.

Train Staff on Accommodating Disabilities

- Inform staff that all meals/snacks must meet CACFP meal pattern requirements.
 - Participants with a disability that affects the diet must be accommodated. It is vital to follow the directive of a written medical statement to ensure the safety of a participant.
 - Kitchen staff must know how to properly manage special dietary needs and make substitutions (ex. know appropriate food substitutions, reading labels for food allergens).
 - Classroom staff must inform the designated staff responsible for managing special dietary needs when a parent/guardian brings in a food/beverage to the classroom so the request can be handled appropriately.
 - Staff completing meal counts must know that meals/snacks CANNOT be claimed when:
 - A participant is served a meal or snack that does not meet meal pattern requirements and there is no written medical statement or documentation for non-dairy milk substitute on file.
 - A participant is served a meal or snack that includes parent/guardian provided foods or beverages and there is no written medical statement or documentation for non-dairy milk substitution on file.
- Examples:
- When parent/guardian provides food because the family eats vegetarian, or does not eat certain meats because of religious reasons
 - When parent/guardian provides a milk substitute because of general health concern or lifestyle choice

Menu Evaluation

- Review menus and determine if your program will design a meal plan within the CACFP meal pattern to accommodate common disabilities or other requests. Examples:
 - Offer lactose-free milk
 - Offer a non-dairy milk substitute nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk
 - Offer a daily vegetarian option