

Menu Modifications in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Operators may receive requests to make menu modifications for CACFP participants. This tip sheet provides guidance on how to accommodate menu modifications and continue to claim reimbursement for these meals. CACFP Operators may not claim reimbursement for meals that do not meet the requirements stated in this tip sheet.

Menu Modifications for Participants without a Disability

Parents or household members may request that CACFP Operators make menu modifications for participants due to special dietary needs, personal preference, religious reasons, or in other instances where it is not a disability. For example, parents may request that their child receives a fluid milk substitute or the household member of an adult participant may request that only gluten-free grains are served to the participant. These substitutes are allowable provided that they are creditable components in the CACFP.

It is at the center or home's discretion to provide menu modifications if the request for the modification is not related to a disability; however, CACFP Operators are strongly encouraged to accommodate the dietary needs of participants without a disability.

Tip! In order for the CACFP Operator to claim reimbursement of a meal for a participant without a disability, the parent or household member may only provide one component per meal; the CACFP Operator must provide all other components.

Nondairy beverages served in place of fluid milk must meet the minimum nutrient requirements for fluid milk substitutes in order for the CACFP Operator to claim reimbursement without a signed medical statement. In addition:

Minimum Nutrient Requirements for Fluid Milk Substitutes per 1 cup (8 oz)	
Calcium	276 mg
Protein	8 g
Vitamin A	500 IU (150 mcg)
Vitamin D	25% DV (2.5 mcg)
Magnesium	24 mg
Phosphorus	222 mg
Potassium	349 mg
Riboflavin	0.44 mg
Vitamin B-12	1.1 mcg

- Parents or household members must provide a written request for a nondairy beverage substitute, identifying the medical or other special dietary need that restricts the participant's diet. The written request may be incorporated into an existing form (e.g., enrollment record), or on a specific form (e.g., CACFP 49, Parental [or household member] Request for Fluid Milk Substitutions form on the California Department of Education (CDE) CACFP Forms web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/cc/fm.asp>. A signed written statement is not required.
- All beverages served to children of any age in licensed child care centers and homes must be unflavored to comply with the California Healthy Beverages in Child Care Act.

For menu modifications other than fluid milk substitutes, CACFP Operators must document the modification on either an existing form (e.g., enrollment record), or on a specific form (e.g., CACFP 12, Parent/Guardian's Form for Declining a Provider's Infant Formula or Food or CACFP 84, Parent/Guardian's Form for Declining a Provider's Food for Older Children [and adults] accessible in the Download Forms section of the CDE Child Nutrition Information and Payment System at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/cc/fm.asp>.

Menu Modifications for Participants with Disabilities

CACFP Operators **must** make reasonable food and beverage substitutions, at no extra charge, on a case-by-case basis, for participants with a disability that restricts their diet.

If the disability involves a request for foods that do not meet the meal pattern requirements, the CACFP Operator must have a signed written medical statement on file in order to claim those meals for reimbursement.

Medical statements **must** describe how the disability restricts the participant's diet, explain what must be done to accommodate the disability, identify foods to omit from a participant's diet, recommend foods to substitute, and be signed by either a licensed physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner. The CACFP Operator is not required to provide the specific brand name specified, unless the brand item is medically necessary.



The CDE developed the Medical Statement to Request Special Meals and/or Accommodations form, which can be found on the CDE website at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/cr/documents/medstat.doc>, to help agencies and healthcare professionals identify the information required to implement a sound nutrition plan for participants with dietary restrictions due to a disability.

Tip! In many cases, dietary modifications to accommodate a disability are managed within the meal pattern requirements. For example, there are many gluten-free choices (e.g., brown rice, quinoa, and corn tortillas) that meet the requirements for a creditable grain in the CACFP.

CACFP Operators should not delay meal modifications while waiting for the family to submit a medical statement. CACFP Operators can claim meals with dietary modifications that do not meet the meal pattern requirements without a signed medical statement provided that they:

- Maintain documentation of the initial conversation with the family where they first learned of the need for an accommodation and requested a signed written medical statement from a state licensed physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner;
- Document all follow up with the family if the CACFP Operator does not receive the requested medical statement as anticipated; and,
- Diligently continue to follow up with the family until a medical statement is obtained or the request is rescinded.

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Policy Memo CACFP 14-2017,
SFSP 10-2017:**
Modifications to Accommodate
Disabilities in the CACFP and
Summer Food Service Program
PDF: <https://bit.ly/2YNx55p>



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