

## **Special Meals Prescriptions Form Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q. What is the purpose of the Special Meals Prescriptions Form?**

A. The Special Meals Prescriptions Form is a means to ensure children with disabilities have the same opportunities to participate in school meals offered through the Child Nutrition Program, as is available to all other children. The form specifies those foods that the child “can’t have”, food suggestions for “replace with” and “special food preparations” necessary for a child with disabilities, who has special dietary needs. The Special Meals Prescriptions form allows for accommodations to be made to the Child Nutrition Program meal patterns.

### **Q. How does a child qualify for a Special Meals Prescription?**

A. Making accommodations for participation in school meals is required by the federal government for children who meet the guidelines for having a disability as defined in 7 CFR 15b.3(1) (Code of Federal Regulations- Title 7: Agriculture) “a physical or mental handicap which substantially limits one or more major life activities”. Determining if a child has a disability that restricts his/her ability to consume the meals offered to non-disabled students must be decided by a licensed medical authority.

### **Q. What is the Special Meals Prescriptions Form?**

A. The Special Meals Prescriptions Form provides a document for the medical authority to define the nature of the child’s disability, the reason why the disability prevents the child from eating regular meals, and the omissions, substitutions, and modifications required for the child to safely and effectively participate in meals offered by the Child Nutrition Program.

### **Q. What is considered a special dietary need?**

A. A child is considered to have a special dietary need when his/her disability prevents the child from eating meals prepared for the general population. Special dietary needs can include, but are not limited to: added or reduced calories; thickened liquids; omitting, substituted, and modifying food textures to accommodate a feeding and swallowing disorder; substituting foods due to a life threatening allergy.

### **Q. Is this Special Meals Prescriptions part of my child’s Individual Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan?**

A. Yes. If your child requires a Special Meals Prescriptions Form to safely access the school lunch program, then it is to be a part of your child’s IEP or 504 Plan.

### **Q. What if my child has a medical condition that requires nutrition accommodations but my child does not have an educational disability requiring an IEP?**

A. Children who have a physical disability which does not affect their learning abilities but does prevent them from accessing the same educational opportunities as other children, including safe participation in the Child Nutrition Program, the plan of care may be a 504 Plan (refer to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). Examples of physical disabilities that may require nutrition accommodation include but are not limited to: a food allergy with a life threatening reaction (anaphylactic reaction); metabolic disease (such as cystic fibrosis or PKU); muscular dystrophy; heart disorders, celiac disease, complications from cleft palate, etc. For nutrition accommodations only, a school plan of care may be an alternative to a 504 Plan. Check with your building Principal to determine what is best for your child.

**Q. What about children with food allergies or intolerances?**

A. Food allergies such as those which cause a child to have an anaphylactic reaction, and digestive conditions such as celiac disease, qualify as a physical disability.

For non-life threatening allergies or intolerances, it is up to the discretion of each institution if and for what conditions they will provide substitutions. A Special Meals Prescriptions Form must be completed if you want your child's institution to determine if your child's allergies or intolerances are subject to substitutions.

Institutions are not required to make modifications to meals based upon the food choices or preferences of a family or a child.

**Q. What is an “accommodation”?**

A. An “accommodation” includes those necessary food omissions, modifications, and substitutions, that allow the child to participate in meals offered through the Child Nutrition Program.

- a. Can't Have (Omissions) refers to a special food item that needs to be removed from your child's menu.
- b. Replace With (Substitutions) refers to exchanging a food on the menu determined not safe for another food suggestion of similar nutritional value that is safe for your child.
- c. Special Food Preparation (Modifications) refers to taking a food offered on the menu and changing the consistency so that it is safe for your child to eat.

**Q. How are food omission, substitutions, and modifications decided for my child?**

A. For those children determined eligible for food omission, modification and/or substitutions, the special dietary request is documented on a Special Meals Prescription Form. The medical professional determines the child's disability status. From the determination come foods that the child can't have, foods suggestions to replace with, and special food preparations based upon:

- The child having nutrition concerns such as the need for increased calories, reduced calories, foods that must be avoided due to food allergy, etc.
- The child having a feeding and swallowing disorder, such as chewing difficulties, problems with swallowing liquids, etc. For example, the form outlines safe consistencies of food and drink on the Special Meals Prescriptions Form.
- The child having both nutrition and feeding and swallowing concerns.

**Q. If my child requires special foods not on the menu, how are these paid for?**

A. There will be no additional charge for children with an identified disability who qualify as having a special dietary need that requires omission, substitution, and modification and/or special supplement, for those meals and snacks offered through the Child Nutrition Program. Meals must also be provided at a reduced price or free for children who meet the financial guidelines.

**Q. After the form is completed and signed by the child's physician/medical authority, what happens next?**

A. Return the completed Meals Prescription form to your child's school nurse.

**Q. How often does the form need to be updated?**

A. Your child's Special Meals Prescriptions form will be kept on file until implemented until we hear otherwise. If your child's nutritional needs change during the school year, an updated form must be submitted or a signed parental letter indicating the change.

**Q. How can I get the Special Meals Prescriptions form?**

- A. a. To view online, click [here](#).
- b. Call the Food & Nutrition Services Department at (574) 722-2911 or visit us at 2829 George Street.

**Q. If I have further questions about special dietary needs, who can I contact?**

A. For further information, contact the LCSC Food Service Director at (574) 722-2911 ext. 10140.

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