

Introduction

In accordance with state and federal guidelines, the Food and Nutrition Services (FANS) department may be required to provide meal accommodations for students with special dietary needs. FANS must follow the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) guidelines and the district's food allergy management plan (FAMP) when accommodating students with special dietary needs.

Different types of special dietary needs include:

- Medical disability
- Special dietary needs, not medical disability related
- Special dietary needs related to cultural, religious, or ethical practices

This guide will outline the meal accommodations available for each special dietary need.

Accommodations for a Medical Disability

Definition of a Medical Disability

TDA defines a person with a medical disability as having a physical or mental impairment that 1) substantially limits one or more of major life activities and that 2) has a record or is regarded as having a physical or mental impairment. Major life activities include, but are not limited to:

- Breathing
- Eating
- Caring for oneself
- Performing manual tasks
- Walking
- Learning
- Major bodily functions (include, but are not limited to: functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, and digestive, bowel, respiratory, and cardiovascular functions.)

The FANS department is required to provide reasonable meal accommodations for students with medical disabilities at no additional charge when an appropriate medical

For more information, please visit: www.squaremeals.org, Accommodating Students with Medical Disabilities and Special Dietary Needs.

statement has been provided. Medical accommodations may require, but are not limited to, a modification to the meal pattern, food texture, or method of meal service.

Medical Statement

The FANS department must have a medical statement signed by a medical authority on file before any meal accommodations can be made. The parent must **complete the Food Allergy/Intolerance Notification Form**, included in the district's food allergy information packet. This form must be completed by a licensed medical authority, including MD, DO, NP, and APRN. Completion of the form will provide the FANS department with the following information, required by TDA guidelines:

1. Explanation of the student's disability.
2. Information on how this condition restricts the student's diet and what major life activities are affected by the disability.
3. Description of the accommodations to be made: food items or ingredients to be omitted, special dietary supplements, substitutions, and other accommodation information, as appropriate.

The meal will be reimbursable as long as the meal meets the specifications described in the medical statement. Medical accommodations apply to all food services, including a la carte sales.

Steps for Implementation of Medical Meal Accommodations

1. The parent must complete and turn-in the food allergy/intolerance notification form and food allergy packet to the campus nurse.
2. The campus nurse will send completed paperwork to the FANS registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN).
3. The RDN will then do the following:
 - a. Add food allergy alerts to student's meal account.
 - b. Collaborate with the student's parents/guardians to determine student's food preferences and plan an appropriate menu for the student.
 - c. Work with the site-based food service manager and employees on implementing all accommodations and specialized menus.

Parents have the right to examine all relevant records and to appeal decisions made regarding the accommodation requests.

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Parents are not required to provide an annual updated statement from the medical authority. However, the district may contact the parents to ask if the student's medical condition has changed and may also ask for the parent or guardian to sign a statement indicating that the student no longer needs a meal accommodation.

Accommodations for Special Dietary Needs, Not Medical Disability Related

The FANS department may make meal accommodations for students who do not have a medical disability but who have special dietary needs as long as the **meal served meets the meal pattern**. Such accommodations are made only on a case-by-case basis. These guidelines apply to the following students:

- Students who have food intolerances or allergies that do not affect a major life activity.
- Students who follow religious, cultural, or ethical practices that prevent the students from eating a specific food or ingredient.

Steps for Requesting Special Dietary Needs Meal Accommodations

1. A parent, guardian, or authorized medical authority must complete a written request that describes the student's special dietary needs.
2. The request must then be submitted to the FANS RDN at kisskom@ltidschools.org.
3. When such a student is identified, the student will be able to choose from multiple choices in the meal service line under the offer versus serve (OVS) strategy. In cases where the OVS method is not applicable, the FANS department may prepare different plated **reimbursable meals** from which students may choose. Again, such accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis.
4. The FANS RDN will communicate and work with parents on meal accommodations for the student. The FANS department welcomes input and suggestions from parents, religious, and cultural groups to identify appropriate meal options.

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