

# Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs

To download a copy of the **IDEA Special Diet Request** form, please click either [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

## OVERVIEW

IDEA Public Schools Child Nutrition Program (CNP) provides nutritious meals that follow USDA/State Agency guidelines to all students, including those who require special diet accommodation due to medical need (i.e., food allergies, disabilities, etc).

Special Diets are menu accommodations that are required for students due to a disability, non-life threatening food allergy or food intolerance as determined by a U.S. licensed physician or registered dietitian. To ensure menu modifications for a student with a medical need can be accommodated, the parent/guardian must provide an IDEA Special Diet Request form to their campus Cafeteria Manager.

## REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

\*All requests **must** be on a current IDEA Public Schools Special Diet Request Form. Requests not on a current IDEA Special Diet form will cause delays in processing.

### Medical Statement for Students with Disabilities and Life-Threatening Food Allergies:

- Is signed by a United States licensed physician who is authorized to write prescriptions within the state that the student resides in.
- Identifies student's medical condition/disability.
- Includes an explanation of why the disability restricts the student's diet.
- Identifies the major life activity(ies) affected by the disability.
- Lists the food or foods to be omitted from the student's diet and any foods that may need to be substituted.

### Medical Statement for Students with Special Dietary needs that are Non-Life-Threatening:

- Is signed by a United States licensed physician who is authorized to write prescriptions within the state that the student resides in.
- Identifies the medical condition that restricts the student's diet.
- Lists the food or foods to be omitted from the student's diet and any foods that may need to be substituted.

## IDEA DIETARY ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

When an assessment completed by a United States licensed physician indicates a child's food allergies may result in severe, life-threatening (anaphylactic) reactions, or the child's condition is defined as a disability under either Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or Part B of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, dietary substitutions prescribed by the physician must be made. While IDEA strives to accommodate all special diet requests, per our governing state bodies, CNP is not required to make food substitutions for children with food allergies or intolerances that are not considered a disability and therefore **may not** be eligible for certain dietary accommodations by CNP. Students with non-life-threatening food allergies/intolerances will be approved on a case-by-case basis.

There is a **three-week** lead time for processing of all completed and signed special diet requests once received by the Special Diet Manager. It is the responsibility of the guardian/parent to provide meals from home or send additional meal items that can be used in conjunction with our meal service to ensure a complete meal is available daily until you have received confirmation that your child's request form has been approved.

All completed Special Diet Requests must be provided to the campus Cafeteria Manager who will then submit it to the Special Diet Manager for processing. Dietary accommodations can **only** be made once the Special Diet Manager receives and approves the request. Parents/guardians should plan to provide safe meals until they have been notified that the request has been completed. Incomplete forms or requests not on an IDEA Special Diet Request form can **NOT** be accepted and will cause a delay in processing.

**NOTE:** We aim to process all special diet requests within 3 weeks of receipt, however, depending on the complexity of the request, additional time may be needed to ensure the delivery of appropriate products. Please reach out to your campus Cafeteria Manager for more information.

## DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

### Parents/Guardians

- Provide an IDEA Special Dietary Request form to the campus Cafeteria Manager, making sure that it includes all required information as listed on page 1.
  - **NOTE:** If the Special Diet Request form contains any statements requiring further clarification, special dietary accommodations will not begin until the Special Diet Manager receives clarification.

- Provide an updated form when a change occurs such as the student has developed a new allergy/intolerance or an allergen that was previously accommodated needs to be removed.
  - **NOTE:** Dietary accommodations **cannot** be changed prior to receiving an updated request form from your child's physician that has been approved by the Special Diet Manager.
- If an accommodation is no longer required, a written statement must be submitted to the campus Cafeteria Manager.
  - For the statement to be accepted, it must include the following information:
    - Parent/guardian's first and last name
    - Student's first and last name
    - Today's date
    - Statement requesting the special diet accommodation be removed for the student.

## IDEA CNP

### What we **CAN** do:

- Provide meals which to the best of our knowledge meet the physician-ordered dietary restrictions as indicated on the special diet request form.

### What we **CANNOT** do:

- Interpret, revise, or change a diet order for students.
- Provide dietary accommodations without an approved Special Diet Request form.
- Provide fruit juice or water as a milk substitute.

## OTHER TYPES OF MEAL REQUESTS

### Personal Preferences and Religious Requests

IDEA CNP understands that religious dietary requirements and personal preferences are important to our families, and we aim to make our menu as accommodating to as many diet types as possible. Unfortunately, at this time, we are not able to accommodate personal or religious dietary requests since these types of requests are not defined as a disability under either Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Although we are not able to make accommodations for these requests at this time, the following information may be helpful for our families who wish to participate in our meal program:

- Our meal service program does allow flexibility and vegetarian-friendly menu choices are currently available:
  - For breakfast, many entrees are vegetarian-friendly and on the days that are not, cereal cracker packs are available as a second option.
  - For lunch, parents/guardians may provide an entrée such as a veggie wrap or another item that better fits their child's dietary needs and the student may select their choice of vegetable, fruit, and milk for free to complete the meal.
- Our online menu system, School Café, provides information such as carbohydrate counts, allergen information and designation of pork containing items.
  - Please note, most of our lunch meat and sausage items are made from turkey and/or chicken product, however, there are a few pork products on our menu. Please refer to School Café for more information.

If you have any questions, please contact: [specialdiet@ideapublicschools.org](mailto:specialdiet@ideapublicschools.org) or for immediate assistance please contact your campus Cafeteria Manager.