

Benton Community School Corporation

Accommodating Special Dietary Needs

Accommodating Students with Special Dietary Needs

Each school and institution that participates in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) school nutrition programs must comply with the federal requirements for accommodating children with special dietary needs. Under the American with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADAAA), a disability is defined as a medical condition and/or impairment that affects any major life function. Therefore, this means that possible modifications could include food restrictions or substitutions, texture changes (pureed, ground, chopped foods, or thickened or thinned liquids), carbohydrate counts, increased or decreased calories, and tube feedings. Modifications to the meal service may also involve ensuring facilities and personnel are adequate to provide necessary services.

Medical Statement Forms and Other Required Documentation

All students needing meal modifications should submit a request for an accommodation using the form provided by the district. Some cases will require a medical statement form that is signed by a state licensed healthcare professional with prescriptive authority, such as a Physician (MD or DO), Nurse Practitioner, or Physician Assistant and a Registered Dietitian (RD).

The completed medical statement must include the following information:

- Information about the student's physical or mental condition and/or impairment that requires the meal accommodation
- How the medical condition and/or impairment affects the student
- An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the student's condition and/or impairment
- The food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives (if applicable)

Medical statements should provide sufficient information to allow the school to provide meals that are appropriate and safe for each student. Schools have the right to contact a student's parents or guardians for clarification or necessary additional information. With a HIPAA and/or FERPA release signed by the student's parents or guardians, schools may contact the medical authorities specified on the form for more information or clarification.

While the school cannot discontinue an accommodation due to a lack of a medical statement, the school should continue to contact the family to obtain any necessary information. This is done to secure the safety of the student and ensure they are receiving meals that adequately meet their needs.

Fluid Milk Substitutions

For students with a requirement for a fluid milk substitution, Benton Community School Corporation will provide a milk alternative (i.e. lactose free milk/soy milk) that meets USDA's nutritional requirements. A Special Dietary Needs Medical Statement Form is required to document the substitution needs.

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Religious or Lifestyle Accommodations

Benton Community School Corporation does not offer accommodation requests due to lifestyle choices. Benton Community School Corporation also has the right to deny requests deemed “unreasonable” or that would change the scope of the school nutrition program. Families and schools are encouraged to work closely together to provide appropriate accommodations for students.

School Meal Food Items

For students and households that wish to see the ingredients or components to meals, they can do so by contacting food services. Please contact the food service director at mcorns@benton.k12.in.us to access this information. Because manufacturers may change their product formulations during the school year, food service may not have immediate access to the new ingredient list.

Standard Operating Procedures

Benton Community School Corporation has specific food safety standard operating policies (SOPs) in place to protect those students that may have a food intolerance or allergy. Please contact the food service director at mcorns@benton.k12.in.us for copies of these SOPs.

Working with Other School Staff

Food service will work with the school administration, 504 coordinator, school nurse, and other staff as deemed appropriate, to make sure the accommodation is handled safely and correctly. The school nurse will work to create an Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP) for appropriate students based on their medical needs.

504 Plans and IEPs

Based upon Federal laws that prohibit discrimination and ensure equal access to education, some students may have instructions for dietary accommodations written into a 504 Plan or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). If the 504 Plan or IEP involves special dietary needs, food service will be informed and will work with the student, family, and other staff to best accommodate the request.

Procedural Safeguards

Parents of students that are requesting a meal accommodation have the right to:

- File a grievance if they believe a violation has occurred regarding the request for a reasonable modification;
- Receive a prompt and unbiased resolution of the grievance;
- Request and participate in an impartial hearing to resolve their grievances;
- Be represented by counsel at the hearing;
- Examine the record; and
- Receive notice of the final decision and a procedure for review, i.e., right to appeal the hearing’s decision.

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