

Food Allergies/Intolerance/Special Dietary Needs Procedure

Purpose

This document tells Site/Center teams what is required when a special dietary accommodation is needed for medical conditions (food allergy or intolerance) or food preferences due to cultural or religious beliefs.

Guidance

USDA requires all children be accommodated and food substitutions be provided if medically necessary under the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA). This includes life-threatening allergies and other health impairments due to acute or chronic health conditions. The child's Health Care Provider (HCP) will make this determination and complete the *Health Care Provider Statement – Dietary Accommodations/Food Allergies Form* as a part of the *Child Health Plan and Provider Orders Form*.

Peanut and tree nut allergies are increasing and reactions can range from a rash to an anaphylactic shock. If your center is not nut-free, careful considerations around cross-contamination of foods is necessary to keep children safe. Consult with your Health/Nutrition/Safety Coach for more information.

For preferences, the Early Learning Program recognizes the diversity of families and seeks to honor their culture and food practices by accommodating preferences whenever possible. Through our family style meal service, children may choose what foods to eat and avoid. These two practices should eliminate the need for families to provide foods. If families offer to provide foods, site/center teams will offer alternative suggestions. Consult with your Health/Nutrition/Safety Coach in this case.

Procedure

- Determine if the concern is a food intolerance, food allergy, special dietary need or food preference. (See *Dietary Accommodations and Food Preferences Flowchart*)
- Discuss the allergy/intolerance with the family at enrollment. Children requiring **only** lactose free cow's milk **or** one of the four approved non-dairy soy milks (Pacific Ultra Soy – plain or vanilla, 8th Continent soy milk – original or vanilla, Great Value - original, Kirkland - organic or plain, or Silk - original) **do not** require an MD Statement. For all milk substitutes, parent must complete the *Parent/Guardian Request for Milk Substitute form*. Because milk is required at breakfast and lunch, those classrooms on the PSESD USDA Contract should follow the procedure for disallowing meals as needed.
- For Food Intolerance/Allergy, a *Child Health Plan for Food Allergies and HCP Statement Dietary Accommodation/Food Allergies form* will be completed and reviewed by the Nurse Consultant. When medications such as Epi-pen are required, Head Start Nurse Consultants and Dietitians will complete the plan. If the HCP completes the Disability/Health Impairment Sections of the *HCP Statement Dietary Accommodations/Food Allergies Form*, centers are **required** to provide food substitutions.
- Review the menu regularly and discuss needed substitutions with the family. It may be necessary to involve food service staff and the Early Learning Dietitian to determine food ingredients. Document food substitutions on the menus.
- The *Special Diet List* is completed and posted confidentially in the classroom and in a visible place in the food preparation area. Classroom and food service staff are made aware of these accommodations.
- Complete the *Child Supplemental Food Plan Form* if necessary.
- Site/Center team members sit at the same table as the children with food allergies/intolerances. Children may need to be reminded which foods to avoid.
- Consult your Health/Nutrition/Safety Coach for questions.

Related Documents

Parent/Guardian Request for Milk Substitute Form

Child Health Plan and Provider Orders Form

Special Diet List

Child Supplemental Food Plan Form

Dietary Accommodations Food Preference Flowchart