

Special Dietary Needs

As more children with disabilities enroll in regular school programs and the increased prevalence of food allergies and intolerances among children, it is necessary for school nutrition personnel to understand their role in accommodating the special dietary needs of the schoolchildren they serve. Special dietary needs in the school setting fall into two categories: special dietary needs based on a disability and special dietary needs based on a non-disability.

Schools must provide meal accommodations for students with a recognized medical disability and have a written medical statement completed and signed by a licensed physician. Accommodations are optional for children with a non-disability and the accommodations must be consistent with the meal pattern and dietary specifications.

When food allergies result in a severe, life-threatening reaction, a child's condition would rise to the level of a disability. The sponsor is required to accommodate the prescribed diet ordered by a licensed physician.

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For more information on Special Dietary Needs, see the Quick Reference Guide to [Accommodating Special Dietary Needs](#).

After you have reviewed the information contained in the Quick Reference Guide, try the [Apply Your Knowledge](#) self-check.

The School Nutrition Primer can be utilized by food service directors and administrators as a Professional Standards training resource. Reviewing the **Quick Reference Guides** with staff and administering the **Apply Your Knowledge** self-check quiz may count for 15 minute training.

The training topic Special Dietary Needs provides the following Professional Standards:

Key Area: Nutrition (1000)

Key Topics: Menu Planning (1100)

Learning Objectives: Plan meals to accommodate special diets (1160)

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