HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

HISD Nutrition Services
BRINGING GOOD FOOD TO EVERY TABLE.

Special Dietary Accommodations Policy

REASON FOR POLICY

To provide clear and comprehensive information about HISD's special dietary accommodations. This guide will clearly outline procedures and timelines, answer common questions, and provide detailed information on special dietary accommodations.

DEFINITIONS

VALID MEDICAL CONDITION – A physician-certified medical diagnosis.

DIAGNOSIS – Identification of the nature of an illness and/or condition that has been given by the Physician.

- Must be associated with the dietary accommodations being requested. A complete list is needed to ensure we are providing proper care.
  - Example: "Picky eater" by itself is not considered a valid medical condition.

MILK SUBSTITUTE – A non-dairy beverage that replaces dairy milk.

- Milk substitutions are allowed for students with valid medical conditions that are unable to consume dairy products.
- HISD's milk substitution is Soy Milk because it is most nutritionally similar to dairy milk.
- If the student is unable to consume soy or dairy milk for a medical reason, Nutrition Services will be in contact with you upon processing.

FOOD ALLERGY – An abnormal immune response to a specific food protein.

ANAPHYLAXIS – A serious and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction to a specific food protein that requires epinephrine and immediate medical care. Anaphylaxis is considered a disability.

FOOD INTOLERANCE – Adverse food-induced reaction that does not involve the immune system.

- Example: lactose intolerance

DISABILITY – Physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

- Example: eating, concentrating, communicating, regular growth, breathing, etc.

SUPPLEMENT – Oral nutrition supplements are a food product that provides extra nutrients and are available in many forms (powders, liquids, etc.).

- Supplements may be offered for students with disabilities and appropriate medical need.
- Can be given standalone or in addition to meals served at school.
- We will do our best to source what the doctors are requesting. Specialized supplements may take longer to procure. In some extreme cases, we may not be able to source the item.

MEDICAL STATEMENT/PHYSICIAN'S FORM – A formal statement from the medical authority stating the student's diagnosis and all accommodations that are needed. Must be signed by the medical authority.

- HISD has a Physician's Request form you can find on the Nutrition Services website. This is the preferred form because it has all the necessary parts that are needed for processing.

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SPECIAL DIETS PROTOCOL

HISD provides dietary accommodations for students with disabilities, life-threatening food allergies, and physician-certified medical needs.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

The Texas Department of Agriculture has set forth the following guidelines for accommodating children with special dietary needs. For Nutrition Services to make a meal accommodation for a student with a medical disability, the household must provide a written medical statement. For a medical statement to be valid, it must be written by a medical authority licensed to write prescriptions by the State of Texas or Registered Dietitians.

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

- Signed by a Registered Dietitian or medical practitioner authorized to write prescriptions in the state of Texas.
- Identify the child's medical condition/disability.
- Include an explanation of why the disability restricts the child's diet.
- Identify the major life activity affected by the disability.
- List the food or foods to be omitted from the child's diet and the food or choice of foods that must be substituted.

Medical Statement for Students with Special Dietary Needs (non-disabled):

- Signed by a Registered Dietitian or medical practitioner authorized to write prescriptions in the state of Texas.
- Identify the medical condition that restricts the child's diet.
- Lists the food or foods to be omitted from the child's diet and the food or choice of foods to be substituted.

HISD DIETARY ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

The preferred form for dietary accommodation requests is the HISD Physician's Request for Special Dietary Accommodations form (special diets form) located on the HISD Nutrition Services website.

This documentation must be provided by the student's parent/guardian to the school nurse who will then email it to the Nutrition Services office. Dietary accommodations will be arranged once Nutrition Services receives and processes the request. Any information missing from the form will result in delays to putting dietary accommodations in place. Our processing time is up to two business weeks.

NOTE: Dietary accommodations that require the purchase of special diet items may not be available immediately. Please allow up to 6 weeks to receive the first delivery of a special order.

For more information contact:

NSSPECIALDIETS@houstonisd.org

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DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

- Provide a Physician's Request for Special Dietary Accommodations form (special diet form) to the school nurse, making sure that it includes all required information.
  - **NOTE:** If the physician's order contains any statements requiring further clarification, special dietary accommodations will not begin until the physician provides further written clarification.
  - Provide updated physician's orders as necessary.
- Give the school nurse a written statement signed by the physician when accommodations are no longer needed.
- Dietary accommodations cannot be changed prior to receiving updated documentation from the physician.
- Work with the school nurse and HISD Nutrition Services dietitian to review and return modified menus as soon as possible.
  - **NOTE:** Modified menus will not be implemented until approval is received.
- Please submit a new Physician's Request for Special Dietary Accommodations form (special diet form) each school year.
  - Please provide an updated physician's statement to the school nurse during the summer, prior to the beginning of school.
  - There may be a delay of up to 6 weeks if special diet items are required.

SCHOOL NURSE

- Scan and email the Physician's Request for Special Dietary Accommodations form (special diet form) to HISD Nutrition Services at NSSPECIALDIETS@houstonisd.org. Or you may fax to 713-491-5998.
- Serve as liaison between the Nutrition Services Department and the parent to gather information, physician documentation, and parent approval of special diet menus.

NUTRITION SERVICES

What we CAN do:

- Provide meals which, to the best of our knowledge, meet the physician-ordered needs.
- Work with the parent and school nurse to adjust the diet as updated physician's orders are received.
- Non-disability students will be handled by a case-by-case basis.

What we CANNOT do:

- Interpret, revise, or change a diet order.
- Provide dietary accommodations for students without a valid medical condition.
- Provide dietary accommodations without the proper physician's documentation.
- Provide fruit juice as a milk substitute for non-disability students.

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FAQ

1. What if the form the medical authority filled out is more restrictive than it needs to be? Example: the student is lactose intolerant, but the doctor says no milk protein. What do I do?
    a. To make any changes to the form, the signing medical authority must update the form. HISD cannot make any changes to the form at any time.
2. Why is the menu I received from Nutrition Services so much more restrictive than what my child eats at home?
    a. HISD may use different products than what you use at home. Chicken nuggets from the local grocery store may be different from the chicken nuggets we have sourced through our distributor.
3. Do I have to use the HISD Physician's Request Form for Special Dietary Accommodations?
    a. No, but it is preferred. HISD's form has all the proper information. This can also expedite the process and helps limit the need for clarification questions.
4. Is the doctor required to fill out every item on the form?
    a. Only items with the asterisk are required, but if we are given more information, this may limit the need for follow-up or clarification questions.
5. Who can fill out the medical information on the special dietary accommodation request form?
    a. The signing medical authority is responsible for documenting the medical diagnosis, the restrictions that are being requested, all parts of the nutrition prescription, substitutions, and sign at the bottom.
6. It has been serval weeks since I submitted my child's Physician's Form. What do I do?
    a. Processing may take up to two business weeks. If it has been longer than the set timeline, please reach out to your school Nurse for assistance. Some extreme cases may take longer than two weeks, however you will be notified within the two-week timeline.
7. Can my dietary accommodation form be carried over?
    a. Yes, but HISD requires a written confirmation statement from the parent or Physician prior to processing. After 5 years, HISD will require an updated Physician's Request Form to ensure the safety of your student. If you are unable to obtain a new form after the 5-year period, please contact NSSpecialDiets@houstonisd.org to discuss next steps. This will be done on a case-by-case basis.