

Knox County Schools Dietary Accommodations Protocol

2026-2027

The School Nutrition Program is required to accommodate children with any type of documented medical or physical impairment that restricts the child's diet as defined by the American Disability Act and ADA Amendment Act of 2008. A separate form and process is required to accommodate students from the cafeteria due to regulations from the School Nutrition Program as regulated by the USDA.

Regulatory Requirements

- ADA Amendment Act of 2008 (Appendix A) constitutes a disability as most physical and mental impairments and that School Food Authorities (SFAs) should ensure equal access to program benefits for children with disabilities
- SP 40 – 2017 (Appendix A) USDA's school meal program aims to provide all participating children with nutritious meals, including children with disabilities to have equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program (FFVP) and the afterschool snack component of the NSLP
- Reasonable modifications must be made for children with medical orders at no extra charge to the child

Medical Documentation

- According to the USDA, a meal modification that does not follow the program meal pattern must have a medical statement to receive reimbursement.
- Knox County Schools (KCS) DOES require a medical statement for any dietary modifications on the current KCS Special Dietary Accommodations form, FSD-49
- A licensed healthcare provider, with an established professional relationship with the child, must include the following documentation in order for accommodations to be made:
 1. Information on impairment that is sufficient to allow the SFA to understand how it restricts the child's diet
 2. Foods to be omitted
 3. Recommended substitutions to replace omitted food items
 4. Licensed healthcare provider's signature
- All special dietary requests are processed and reviewed by KCS Registered Dietitian (RD) prior to accommodations being made.
- If the SFA is aware of a food restriction, staff cannot unduly delay providing modifications while awaiting the completed FSD-49 form. Instead, staff should provide reasonable modifications to keep the child safe and request the family provide a medical statement as soon as possible (the cafeteria may not be able to provide all meal components). Medical statements must be submitted within 15 school days or accommodations may be paused.
- Accommodations will only be made for meal components that contribute to the reimbursable meal.
- KCS requires the FSD-49 form to be completed and turned in yearly.
- If a child has a FSD-49 form on file that has not been accommodated in 3 years or longer, the order is considered null.

Release Statements

- The information on the FSD-49 form is considered a diet order when signed by the healthcare professional and the cafeteria staff must follow it accordingly. If the student's diet order changes, the licensed healthcare professional must submit an updated form to the School Nutrition office.
- If the parent/guardian wants the child to be served foods that are restricted on the medical

form, they must complete, sign, and return the *KCS Parental Release* statement (Appendix B, FSD-50 form). Verbal orders from parents cannot be accepted.

Lifestyle Accommodations

- The School Nutrition Program is not required by the USDA to provide special food items for students based on lifestyle choice (vegetarian, religious, etc.), but strive to offer enough variety for these families who decide to eat meals from the cafeteria.
- The cafeteria does not provide oversight for children's food choices regarding lifestyle accommodations or parent preferences. Parents are encouraged to discuss menu options and selections with their children to assist them in making choices that meet their lifestyle needs.

Family Responsibilities

- Families may access food menus and food product items lists online, which list nutrition information and common food allergens. With this information, parents/students may review and determine the best and safe food options.
- Provide accurate, updated signed medical documentation (FSD-49) each year.
- Communicate with a school nurse if moving schools.
- Communicate with cafeteria staff how often the child plans to eat from the cafeteria so food is safely prepared and to mitigate waste.
- Educate the child in self-management of his/her allergy (as age appropriate):
 - ✓ Safe and unsafe foods
 - ✓ Symptoms of an allergic reaction
 - ✓ How and when to tell adult if they are having an allergic reaction
 - ✓ How to read food labels
 - ✓ The importance of not sharing foods with other children or sharing utensils
 - ✓ If applicable, inform child that he/she is expected to pick up specially prepared cafeteria trays at school and help child establish contact with the cafeteria manager

Cafeteria Responsibilities

- Keep each child's meal modification order and diet instructions on file and confidential
- Follow diet instructions made by dietitian to assure safe food is served to student
- Order allergen safe foods per doctor's orders to best follow the meal pattern and menu
- Practice cross-contact prevention strategies to ensure safety
- Communicate with KCS dietitian regarding any questions or clarifications related to diet orders and meal modifications
- Under no circumstances should school food service staff diagnose health conditions, prescribe nutritional requirements, interpret, or revise/change a diet order

School Nutrition Program/RD Responsibility

- Know ingredients of all products served in the NSLP and NSBP and update annually or as products change
- Compile lists of foods options safe for specific allergy
- Provide guidance/training to cafeteria in making menu accommodations as needed
- Attend IEP/504 meetings as necessary

- Contact parent/guardian as needed for additional information.
- May contact the licensed healthcare provider if the diet prescription and/or requested accommodations needs clarification
- Provide annual training to cafeteria staff on providing safe meal accommodations for medical diagnosis

Health Services Responsibility

- If a nurse receives FSD-49 form directly, the nurse should scan the RD and cafeteria manager. The nurse should obtain additional information from the parent/guardian as needed.
- Should send only FSD-49 form to RD; medication forms for food allergies or notes from doctors will not be accepted as sufficient documentation.
- Nurse to discuss 504/IEP meetings with RD as appropriate.
- Nurses approve of texture modified foods when serving students puree or mechanical soft foods and have the autonomy to send food back to the cafeteria if it does not meet consistency standards as set by the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI).
- Nurse coordinates the provision of thickener for liquids as needed by medical orders for cafeteria needs and classroom needs. The nurse or teacher thickens liquids for students per medical order in the classroom.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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Resource Citation

1. **USDA Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs SP 40-2017**
[2017 Edition of Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs | Food and Nutrition Service](#)
2. **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (US). ADA AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2008.** PL 110-325 (S 3406). September 25, 2008. <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/adaaa.cfm>. Accessed 15 July 2019.

The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (Amendments Act), effective January 1, 2009, amended the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and included a conforming amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act) that affects the meaning of disability in Section 504. The standards adopted by the ADA were designed not to restrict the rights or remedies available under Section 504. The Title II regulations applicable to free appropriate public education issues do not provide greater protection than applicable Section 504 regulations. This guidance focuses primarily on Section 504.