




STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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OFFICE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

July 20, 2010

TO: Principals and School Food Service Managers
FROM: 
Glenna Owens, Director
School Food Services Director

SUBJECT: FAQs: FOOD SUBSTITUTIONS

Please use the following information as reference when responding to concerns and inquiries related to food substitutions such as, "FLUID MILK SUBSTITUTIONS IN THE SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS" posted on June 18, 2010 to Memos and Notices:

1. My child is allergic to milk, is she required to take it when she eats school meals?

Milk is one of the required food items in the USDA meal pattern that "credits" the meal as reimbursable. If milk is not on your child's tray at the "Point of Service" (end of the line), the Department of Education will not be reimbursed by the federal government to offset the cost of the meal.

These regulations apply to elementary and middle schools that are required to serve all four breakfast, and five lunch food items to meet meal pattern requirements. Some elementary and middle schools have elected to give students a choice of meal items. In these schools, students are not required to take milk as one of the meal items.

The USDA does not recognize juice or water as an acceptable substitute; therefore, substitutions cannot be made.

If your child does not want her milk, she may offer it to a friend once she is seated.

2. My son is in high school. He doesn't drink milk. Is he required to take it at lunch?

No. The USDA requires all high schools to use the "Offer vs. Serve" system of meal service. Students are allowed to choose a minimum of three out of five meal items. As long as he has three of the meal items, the meal is reimbursable.

3. If I submit a note saying my child is allergic to milk, will the school provide juice with her meal?

No. USDA does not recognize juice as a substitute for milk. Although lactose-free milk is available in retail grocery stores, it is not yet available in the half-pint single serving size used in our school food service program.

4. If my child's doctor writes a note asking to provide juice instead of milk, will that be ok?

Generally, children with food allergies or intolerances do not have a disability as defined under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or Part B of IDEA. However, if in a licensed physician's assessment, food allergies may result in severe, life-threatening (anaphylactic) reactions, the child's condition would meet the definition of "disability," and food substitutions prescribed by the licensed physician must be made.

- If your child has a documented "disability" that restricts his or her diet, a Medical Diet Order form must be filled out by a medical doctor.

The physician's statement (Medical Diet Order Form) must identify:

- the child's disability;
- an explanation of why the disability restricts the child's diet;
- the major life activity affected by the disability;
- the food or foods to be omitted from the child's diet, and the food or choice of foods that must be substituted

5. My daughter is in the third grade, and last year she got juice instead of milk because I told the school she doesn't drink milk. What will happen this coming year?

Your daughter is going to get milk this year, if she attends a school that does not give students a choice of meal items (see answer #1). Administrators and cafeteria staff must comply with USDA guidelines, and cannot make special accommodations that don't meet the standards for a reimbursable meal.

Milk is an excellent source for calcium and an important nutrient for growing children. If your daughter doesn't want her milk, she may offer it to a friend.

6. We are not allowed to eat certain foods due to religious beliefs. Can the cafeteria manager make special meals for my child?

No. The School Food Service Manager must follow the five-week cycle menu. Nutrition goals are met in the statewide cycle menu. Deviations or substitutions may disqualify the meal for reimbursement.

School Food Services Branch has a financial responsibility to keep food costs in line, and in that process, school food service managers must follow purchasing and preparation standards. The food budget does not allow flexibility in making accommodations other than those provided in "answer # 4", through a Medical Diet Order Form.

Most schools post their monthly menus, giving students an opportunity to bring a home lunch on the days they prefer not to eat a school meal.

Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 733-8400 or by email.

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