

# When to Request a Medical Statement in the CACFP

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**CACFP iTrain  
Simple Lesson Plan**

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# When to Request a Medical Statement in the CACFP

## CACFP iTrain Simple Lesson Plan

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
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**Intended Audience:** CACFP personnel and other child care staff

**Description:** This lesson explains how to identify situations requiring medical statements for meal accommodations.

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## Institute of Child Nutrition The University of Mississippi

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1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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## Lesson-at-a-Glance

Time	Topic	Activity	Materials
<b>Introduction</b>			
5 minutes	▶ Introduction and Overview		▶ PowerPoint slide deck ▶ Computer ▶ Projector (if available) ▶ Pens or Pencils
<b>Objective:</b> Identify situations requiring medical statements for meal accommodations.			
15 minutes	▶ Laws Requiring Meal Accommodations in CACFP Centers ▶ Definition of Disability ▶ Reasonable Accommodation ▶ Medical Statement Details ▶ Non-Disability Special Dietary Needs ▶ Milk Substitutions	▶ Case Study: Is a Medical Statement Needed?	▶ Worksheet: Case Study: Is a Medical Statement Needed? ▶ Answer Key: Case Study: Is a Medical Statement Needed?
<b>Conclusion</b>			
10 minutes	▶ Lesson Summary ▶ Training Evaluation	▶ Speed Action Planning ▶ Training Evaluation (Optional)	▶ Worksheet: Speed Action Planning ▶ Optional: Training Evaluation & Training Certificate
<b>Total Time: 30 minutes</b>			

## References

Foodsafety.gov. (2019, April 12). *Safe minimum cooking temperatures charts*. <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html>

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2018). *Food allergies for school nutrition managers and staff*. University, MS. <https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/food-allergies-for-school-nutrition-managers-staff/>

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2019). *Food safety in child care*. <https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/food-safety-in-child-care/>

## Internet Resources

- Institute of Child Nutrition: [www.theicn.org](http://www.theicn.org)
- USDA’s Team Nutrition: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn>

## Preparation Checklist

**Instructions:** Use the Preparation Checklist to prepare for the training session. Keep track of your progress by checking off tasks as they are completed.

Done <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lesson Tasks
<b>Gather Materials</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Training Script
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Computer and Projector Screen
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Worksheets and Handouts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case Study: Is a Medical Statement Needed?</li> <li>• Case Study: Is a Medical Statement Needed? Answer Key</li> <li>• Speed Action Planning</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Pens or pencils (one per participant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Optional: Training Certificate/Evaluation/Feedback Form (one per participant)
<b>Prepare for Lesson</b>	
<b>Before the training day:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Review the training script and research any relevant State or local requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The content reflects the Federal regulations and/or national best practices or standards. However, it's essential to include any additional State or local requirements when presenting this training.</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Make enough copies of the handouts for each participant.
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Test the PowerPoint on the computer and projector screen.
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Optional: Develop and print a session certificate/evaluation/feedback form (one per participant)
<b>On the training day:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Place pens or pencils on tables (one per participant).
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Distribute materials to each participant.
<b>On the instructor’s table:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Training Script
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Instructor’s copy of handouts and/or worksheets
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Optional: Session Evaluation/Feedback Forms

## Training Script

**Instructor’s Note:** Each section below has an accompanying slide(s). Review and share the content for each PowerPoint slide.

<b>Introduction</b>
<p><b>Welcome!</b></p> <p>Complete the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Distribute handouts to participants.</li> <li>▶ Welcome participants to the training.</li> <li>▶ Introduce yourself to the participants. Allow participants to introduce themselves by sharing their name and one thing they would like to get from this training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Medical Statement</b></p> <p><b>Ask posing questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Do you have parents request special meals for their children?</li> <li>▶ How do you decide how to honor the request?</li> </ul> <p><b>Share core content:</b> These are common questions regarding meeting special meal requests. Knowing how to respond is key to ensure you align your practices with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern requirements.</p> <p>This lesson will explore when to require a medical statement for meal accommodations. Particularly, it will explore how to differentiate between medical needs, food preferences, and non-disability needs.</p>
<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> These are common questions regarding meeting special meal requests. Knowing how to respond is key to ensure you align your practices with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern requirements.</p> <p>This lesson will explore when to require a medical statement for meal accommodations. Particularly, it will explore how to differentiate between medical needs, food preferences, and non-disability needs.</p>
<b>Objective:</b> Identify situations requiring medical statements for meal accommodations.
<p><b>Definition of Disability</b></p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> A disability is defined as a health problem that substantially limits major life activities. The health problem could be related to any of the major systems in the body.</p> <p>Some disabilities may call for a meal modification to prevent problems with the child’s health. In these cases, you may need a medical statement.</p>

<p><b>What Is a Medical Statement?</b></p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> A medical statement provides a description of the disability (impairment), foods to avoid or dietary restriction, and appropriate substitutions or needs. It should also include an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the disability. The statement needs to be signed by a State licensed healthcare professional.</p>
<p><b>When Do You Need a Medical Statement?</b></p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> If a child has a disability, it doesn't necessarily require a medical statement. A medical statement is only required when a meal accommodation does not align with the meal pattern requirements. For example, a child with severe seizures must have a very low carbohydrate diet. This accommodation eliminates the grain and fruit component from meals and snacks. This accommodation does not align with the meal pattern; therefore, a child must have a medical statement on file.</p>
<p><b>Example of Disabilities Requiring Meal Accommodations</b></p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> Many conditions require a change in diet to support or improve a child's health. Some disabilities may include but are not limited to food allergies, diabetes, or kidney failure.</p> <p>The medical conditions are all different and require clear instructions on foods to omit and foods to serve the child. Therefore, having a well-written medical statement helps you provide the best meal possible for the child.</p> <p>Essentially, program regulations require program operators to provide modifications for participants with disabilities on a case-by-case basis only when requests are supported by a written statement from a State-licensed healthcare professional, such as a physician or nurse practitioner.</p>
<p><b>When a Medical Statement Isn't Needed</b></p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> As previously mentioned, meals that do not meet the CACFP meal pattern requirements are not eligible for reimbursement unless supported by a medical statement. If a modification request aligns with the meal patterns, a medical statement is not required.</p> <p>For example, a child cannot have strawberries due to a severe food allergy. When strawberries are served, this child will receive a different fruit, such as cherry halves or apple slices. In these situations, it is recommended that the parent or guardian request this accommodation in writing.</p> <p>In other cases, more information may be required. For example, if an infant requires the substitution of a Food and Drug Administration exempt infant formula in place of iron-fortified infant formula to accommodate a disability, this information must be included in the statement.</p>
<p><b>Milk Substitutions</b></p> <p><b>Ask posing question:</b> How many of you have ever received a milk substitution request?</p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> Milk substitutions can be provided without a medical statement as long as the milk substitution is nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk. To determine which substitutions are available, check with your State agency for an approved list.</p>

<p><b>Non-Disability Special Dietary Needs</b></p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> There are times when parents request meal accommodations for non-disability reasons. Generally, the request is based on religious, ethnic, or lifestyle preferences. For example, a parent might ask for a vegetarian diet or a diet without beef. Accommodations are encouraged but not required. For the meal to be reimbursable, centers and homes must follow the meal pattern.</p>
<p><b>Reasonable Accommodation</b></p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> All disabilities requesting accommodations should be taken on a case-by-case basis. You should refer to your State agency/sponsor whenever there are questions.</p> <p>Program operators are not required to make modifications that result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the program. In these situations, some meal modifications may be so expensive that providing the modification would fundamentally alter the nature of the program, such as causing a facility to close for business. Modifications that are so expensive that they would make continued operation of the program unfeasible and create a fundamental change in the nature of the program are not required. However, always refer to your State agency or sponsor before making this decision and for any other questions regarding meal modifications.</p>
<p><b>Activity: Is a Medical Statement Needed?</b>  <b>Time: 15 minutes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Purpose:</b> The purpose of the exercise is to determine if a medical statement is needed.</li> <li>▶ <b>Materials Needed:</b> Case Study: Is a Medical Statement Needed? worksheet</li> <li>▶ <b>Instructions:</b> Distribute the Medical Statement Case Study form. Instruct participants to read each of the case studies and determine if a medical statement is needed. Answer "yes" or "no" after each question. After answering yes or no, go back and answer the questions in the case study.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p><b>Lesson Conclusion</b></p> <p><b>Share core content:</b> To conclude the lesson, a medical statement should be requested when a parent asks for meal accommodation for a child with medical disabilities. A definition of a medical disability is substantially limited life activity or major bodily functions. The medical statement must list foods to avoid and appropriate substitutions. A medical statement is not needed when a non-disability accommodation is requested. The meal pattern must be followed for accommodations for non-disability accommodations.</p> <p><b>Ask posing question:</b> What questions do you have concerning medical statements?</p>

**Activity: Speed Action Planning**  
**Time: 5 minutes**

- ▶ **Purpose:** This purpose of this activity is to establish future steps for applying the information in their workplace.
- ▶ **Materials Needed:** Speed Action Planning worksheet, Planner or Cell Phone Calendar App, and Pencil/Pen
- ▶ **Instructions:** Distribute the Speed Action worksheet. Inform participants that it is important to develop a plan for using the training's information. Ask them to take 1–2 minutes to answer the following three questions to establish an action plan.
  - What did you learn in this training?
  - How will you apply this information in your current or future role?
  - When will you apply this information?

Once participants have finished, encourage them to save this goal to a planner, calendar app, or other sources to ensure they follow through with their plan. Following this activity, dismiss participants from the training.

**Thank You!**

Complete the following tasks:

- ▶ Conclude the training.
- ▶ Refer participants to the Institute of Child Nutrition for additional information at [helpdesk@theicn.org](mailto:helpdesk@theicn.org) or 800-321-3054.
- ▶ Distribute any certificates or evaluations.

## Case Study: Is a Medical Statement Needed?

**Instructions:** Read the following situations and determine if you need to request a medical statement.

- **Case 1** – Molly hasn't been feeling well lately. Her doctor wonders if she has an allergy. An allergy test is scheduled. Before the test, Molly must limit her diet. What is required to follow Molly's diet needs?

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- **Case 2** – Ben has a peanut allergy. As an infant, Ben consumed mostly formula and minimal solid foods. He recently turned one, and the center is ready to start him on the 1-year-old's menu. He is too young for an EPI pen, so the mother is especially concerned about his food. The mother wants Ben to limit his solid foods and slowly introduce them, while remaining on formula. The doctor's statement on file only includes information about not serving peanut-containing foods, but nothing about formula. Can formula be offered? Can his food components be limited?

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- **Case 3** – A mother has a severe allergy to fish. She requests her son not have fish at day care. She doesn't want to come into contact with any fish on her son. Is this a required accommodation? What are the options?

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# Handouts and Worksheets

## Case Study: Is a Medical Statement Needed?

### Answer Key

**Instructions:** Read the following situations and determine if you need to request a medical statement.

• **Case 1** – Molly hasn't been feeling well lately. Her doctor wonders if she has an allergy. An allergy test is scheduled. Before the test, Molly must limit her diet. What is required to follow Molly's diet needs?

*Yes. A medical statement listing food to avoid, allowed food, statement of disability, signed by a physician.*

• **Case 2** – Ben has a peanut allergy. As an infant, Ben consumed mostly formula and minimal solid foods. He recently turned one, and the center is ready to start him on the 1-year-old's menu. He is too young for an EPI pen, so the mother is especially concerned about his food. The mother wants Ben to limit his solid foods and slowly introduce them, while remaining on formula. The doctor's statement on file only includes information about not serving peanut-containing foods, but nothing about formula. Can formula be offered? Can his food components be limited?

*Yes. A medical statement listing food to avoid, allowed food and formula, statement of disability, signed by a physician.*

• **Case 3** – A mother has a severe allergy to fish. She requests her son not have fish at day care. She doesn't want to come into contact with any fish on her son. Is this a required accommodation? What are the options?

*Yes and no. You are not required to make this accommodation but may for non-disability special dietary needs.*

## Speed Action Planning

**Instructions:** Today's training featured key information on when to request a medical statement. Answer the following three questions to establish a plan for using the information.

**1. What did you learn in this training?**

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**2. How will you apply this information in your current or future roles?**

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**3. When will you apply this information (e.g., one week, one month, six months, etc.)?**

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