

Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs in the School Nutrition Programs

Program regulations require School Food Authorities (SFAs) to ensure that breakfast, lunch and snack meals offered through the School Meal Programs meet the meal pattern requirements established in the Program regulations. Federal law and USDA regulations further require SFAs to make reasonable modifications to accommodate children with special dietary needs. This includes providing special meals, at no extra charge, to children with a disability when the disability restricts the child's diet.

- SFAs are **required** to make meal substitutions for children **with a disability** that restricts his or her diet when supported by a written medical statement from a recognized medical authority; in Florida this includes Licensed Physicians (MD, DO), Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners (ARNP), Physician's Assistants (PA), and Registered Dietitians (RD). Upon receipt of a written statement from a State-licensed health care professional, registered dietitian, or a parent or guardian, SFAs are required to provide a fluid milk substitute for students whose disability restricts their diet.
- The medical statement should include a description of the child's physical or mental impairment that is sufficient to allow the SFA to understand how it restricts the child's diet. It should also include an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the disability. In the case of food allergies, this means identifying the food or foods to be omitted and recommending alternatives. In other cases, more information may be required.
- The American with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, P.L. 110-235 (ADA Amendments Act) clarified that Congress intends the term disability to be broad and inclusive, and the question of whether a child has a disability should no longer require extensive analysis. After the passage of the ADA Amendments Act, most physical and mental impairments will constitute a disability. For example, digestion is an example of a bodily function that is a major life activity. A child whose digestion is impaired by lactose intolerance may be a person with a disability whether consuming milk causes the child severe distress or not.

For more information, please refer to [SP 40-2017: 2017 Edition: Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs](#) or the Code of Federal Regulations Title 7 [§210.10 Meal requirements for lunches and requirements for afterschool snacks](#)

SFAs **have the option** to accommodate special dietary needs that do not constitute a disability, including those related to religious or moral convictions, or personal preference, such as vegetarianism, if the requested modifications can be accomplished **within the meal pattern**.

SFAs may consider expense and efficiency in choosing an appropriate approach to accommodate a child's special dietary needs; however, SFAs are **not** required to provide the specific substitutions or other modification requested. SFA's must simply offer a reasonable modification, including generic store brands, that effectively accommodates the child's special dietary needs and provides equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from the program

FDACS Reviewed Fluid Milk Substitutions

Company/Product	Protein	Calcium	Vitamin A	Vitamin D	Magnesium	Phosphorus	Potassium	Riboflavin	Vitamin B-12
USDA Criteria Per Cup Minimum Amount Allowable	8 g	276 mg	500 IU = 150 mcg	100 IU = 2.5 mcg	24 mg	222 mg	349 mg	0.44 mg	1.1 mcg
	% N/A	21%	16%	12%	5%	17%	7%	33%	45%
8th Continent Soy Milk									
8 th Continent Original	8 g	300 mg	500 IU	100 IU	24 mg	250 mg	360 mg	0.51 mg	1.2 mcg
8 th Continent Vanilla	8 g	300 mg	500 IU	100 IU	24 mg	250 mg	460 mg	0.51 mg	1.2 mcg
Bettergoods Soymilk (Walmart)									
Original Unflavored	8 g	300 mg	150 mcg	6 mcg	45 mg	250 mg	460 mg	0.5 mg	1.2 mcg
Pacific Foods (32 oz.)									
Original Ultra Soymilk	10 g	340 mg	150 mcg	2.5 mcg	60 mg	280 mg	510 mg	0.5 mg	1.5 mcg
Silk Soy Milk (Single Serve)									
Original Unflavored	8 g	470 mg	150 mcg	3 mcg	40 mg	230 mg	350 mg	0.44 mg	2.5 mcg
Vanilla Soymilk	8 g	470 mg	150 mcg	3 mcg	40 mg	230 mg	370 mg	0.44 mg	2.4 mcg
Ripple Dairy Pea Protein Milk (Single Serve, Shelf Stable)									
Original Ripple	8 g	440 mg	150 mcg	5 mcg	24 mg	544 mg	422 mg	0.48 mg	1.1 mcg
Unsweetened Ripple	8 g	440 mg	150 mcg	5 mcg	24 mg	531 mg	383 mg	0.48 mg	1.1 mcg
Chocolate Ripple	8 g	440 mg	150 mcg	5 mcg	30 mg	510 mg	477 mg	0.48 mg	1.1 mcg
Vanilla Ripple	8 g	440 mg	150 mcg	5 mcg	24 mg	545 mg	419 mg	0.48 mg	1.1 mcg

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Boost Nutritional Drink (Nestle, Single Serve)—Contains Milk and Soy									
Original- Vanilla, Strawberry, Peach	10 g	320 mg	20%	6 mcg	25%	20%	470 mg	40%	45%
Plus- Vanilla, Strawberry	14 g	360 mg	20%	6 mcg	25%	20%	360 mg	40%	45%
Pearl Organic Soymilk Smart (Kikkoman, Single Serve)									
Original	8 g	300 mg	150 mcg	2.5 mcg	25 mg	230 mg	350 mg	0.5 mg	1.1 mcg
Unsweetened	8 g	300 mg	150 mcg	2.5 mcg	25 mg	230 mg	350 mg	0.5 mg	1.1 mcg
Creamy Vanilla	8 g	300 mg	150 mcg	100 IU	25 mg	230 mg	350 mg	0.5 mg	1.1 mcg
Chocolate	8 g	300 mg	150 mcg	100 IU	25 mg	230 mg	350 mg	0.5 mg	1.1 mcg

Note: "Specialty milks", such as Fairlife and a2 Milk, are fluid milks with benefits that differ from regular cow's milk and non-dairy beverages.

- Fairlife milk comes from cows' milk but is filtered to remove lactose and the lactase enzyme is also added to make Fairlife brand milk a lactose-free milk. Fairlife also lists 13 grams of protein, 6 grams carbohydrate and 380 mg. calcium per 8 fl. oz.
- The a2 Milk brand is from cows who only produce the a2 casein protein which may reduce or eliminate gastrointestinal discomfort as it does not contain any a1 protein. A2 Milk does contain lactose and whey, therefore should not be consumed if by individuals with intolerances to either lactose or whey.

Additional Guidance

- [USDA SP -01-2026](#) Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025- Implementation Requirements for the National School Lunch Program
- [Expanding Fluid Milk Options in Child Nutrition Programs](#)