



## **Accommodating Children with Food Allergies and Food Intolerances**

Arlington Heights District 25 is proud to offer a complete lunch program for students in first through eighth grade. Our mission as part of the National School Lunch Program is to provide meals of maximum nutritional value at a minimum cost to students and staff. We also strive to help students develop an understanding of the relationship between eating a balanced diet and good health. Our lunches meet 1/3 of the recommended dietary allowances for each child's age group and we work at keeping the fat content of our meals below 30% of the total calories. We offer child friendly foods, which in many cases have been especially formulated to be low in fat while providing the flavor that children enjoy and calories that children need.

The district has a staff of food service employees who are dedicated to the children in the district and make lunch time fun and nutritional. Our director is a Nutritionist and a School Food Nutrition Specialist (SFNS). We also have a Registered and Licensed Dietitian on staff. We often work with children who have special dietary needs. We strive to provide each child in our district with a safe and healthy meal, if they choose to participate in the program.

Our food service department keeps all food labels on file that are available upon request. Due to the increase in peanut allergies, our program does not serve food containing peanuts. We contact companies on an as needed basis to inquire about their usage of peanuts in their manufacturing plants. Depending on the severity of the peanut allergy, food substitutions may be made as per the direction provided by the physician's statement on the special form provided to parents. In addition, parents should be aware that other children in the lunchroom are not restricted from bringing food items containing peanuts. If there is an identified need, schools provide "peanut-free" tables for children with peanut allergies.

Children with food allergies can fall into two categories: SEVERE and NON-SEVERE. A child may also have INTOLERANCE to certain foods, which is not defined as an allergy.

The following are definitions:

*Severe food allergy:* an allergic reaction that causes or may cause anaphylaxis

*Non-severe food allergy:* an allergic reaction that occurs when the immune system responds defensively to a specific food protein

*Food intolerance:* an adverse reaction to a food that does not involve the immune system

The following procedures should be followed if a child has a food allergy or intolerance.

### **For Children with SEVERE food allergies**

After receiving documentation of the child's needs from the physician, food services staff will work to provide those children with meals to fit their specialized dietary needs. With a nutritionist and registered dietitian on staff, we will produce a modified meal for that child that does not contain identified allergens. The following describes the process:

- I. If your child has a severe allergy, the parents/guardians should notify the school about their child's allergy by:
  - a. Marking the appropriate allergy information on the district's emergency form (this form is completed annually for all students), and
  - b. Calling the Certified School Nurse or Registered Nurse at your child's school.
- II. The Certified School Nurse will discuss the issue with the parent and review the child's history.
- III. If appropriate, the nurse will send the parent a form for the physician to complete. The form includes:
  - a. The child's disability/condition
  - b. Explanation of how this disability/condition affects child's diet,
  - c. Foods that must be omitted from child's diet, and
  - d. Foods that may be substituted and/or modified
- IV. Upon receipt of the form from the physician, the school nurse will:
  - a. Send a copy to food services, (See V)
  - b. Communicate with the principal and teacher(s) and initiate special, individualized provisions, if necessary,
  - c. Discuss with the student his/her responsibilities that include:
    - Not trading food with others,
    - Not eating anything with unknown ingredients or a food known to contain any allergen, and
    - Being proactive in the care and management of their food allergies and reactions based on their development level, and
    - Notifying an adult immediately if they eat something they believe may contain the food to which they are allergic.
- V. Upon receiving a copy of the physician's statement, food services will:
  - a. Review physician statements submitted by parents/guardians.
  - b. Work with parents and the student (age appropriate) to develop meals that will meet the students needs,
  - c. Review food labels and/or contact the food suppliers to obtain food label information,
  - d. Provide a meal that does not contain identified allergens, and
  - e. Communicate relevant food information to food services staff in the specified child's buildings

### **For Children with NON-SEVERE food allergies and food intolerances**

If parents call with requests for information and/or diet modification requests, the food services department will work to meet those needs on a case by case basis. We will recommend foods currently on our menu as alternatives for those children whose parents have provided us with a physician's statement. In addition, with our "offer versus serve" provision, we may guide the child/parent to choose foods that will meet the child's dietary needs without making substitutions in the menu. The following describes the process:

- I. If your child has a non-severe allergy, the parents/guardians should notify the school about their child's allergy by:
  - a. Marking the appropriate allergy information on the district's emergency form (this form is completed annually for all students), and
  - b. Calling the Certified School Nurse or Registered Nurse at your child's school.
- II. The Certified School Nurse will discuss the issue with the parent and review the child's history.
- III. If appropriate, the nurse will send the parent a form for the physician to complete. The form includes:
  - a. The child's allergy/intolerance
  - b. Explanation of how the allergy/intolerance affects child's diet,
  - c. Foods that must be omitted from child's diet, and
  - d. Foods that may be substituted and/or modified
- IV. Upon receipt of the form from the physician, the school nurse will:
  - a. Send a copy to food services, (See V)
  - b. Communicate with the principal and teacher(s) and initiate special, individualized provisions, if necessary,
  - c. Discuss with the student, on a case by case basis, his/her responsibilities that include:
    - Not trading food with others
    - Not eating anything with unknown ingredients or a food known to contain any allergen
    - Being proactive in the care and management of their food allergies and reactions based on their development level, and
    - Notifying an adult immediately if they eat something they believe may contain the food to which they are allergic.
- V. Upon receiving a copy of the physician's statement, food services will:
  - a. Review physician statements submitted by parents/guardians.
  - b. Work with parents and the student (age appropriate) to develop meals that will meet the students needs,
  - c. Review food labels and/or contact the food suppliers to obtain food label information,
  - d. Modify menu on a case by case basis to provide a meal that the child does tolerate (upon request), and
  - e. Communicate relevant food information to food services staff in the specified child's buildings

The Food Service Department will make every effort to provide a safe food choice for lunch for the student with the identified allergy. Parents may be able to provide more options by providing a bag lunch from home or, in severe cases, having the student eat lunch at home.

The Food Services Department provides healthful meals for our students. We encourage all children to participate in our program and are happy to work with our District's families to make that happen. Please call Coletta Hines-Newell, Director of Food Services at 847-758-4904 or email [hinesnewell@ahsd25.k12.il.us](mailto:hinesnewell@ahsd25.k12.il.us) if you have questions regarding school lunch.

### **USDA Food & Nutrition Services Regulations**

The USDA Food and Nutrition Services offers a guidance document for Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs in School Nutrition Programs. This document states that under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 defines "person with a disability" as any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, including eating. This includes many diseases and conditions. Specific conditions relating directly to food intake would be diabetes and food anaphylaxis (severe food allergy).

In the case of a child with a disability (as defined above) USDA regulations 7 CFR Part 15b require substitutions or modifications in school meals for children whose disabilities restrict their diets. A child with a disability must be provided substitutions in foods when that need is supported by a statement signed by a licensed physician. The physician's statement must identify the following; the child's disability; an explanation of why the disability restricts the child's diet; the major life activity affected by the disability; and the food or foods to be omitted from the child's diet, and the food or choice of foods that must be substituted. The document suggests a registered dietitian may work with the child's medical authority to help meet the child's special nutritional needs. In the cases of a life-threatening allergy the school has the responsibility to provide a safe, non-allergic meal to the child. School food service must make sure all food items offered in a meal meet the prescribed guidelines and are free of foods which are suspected of causing the allergic reaction. This means that the food labels or specifications will need to be checked to ensure that they do not contain traces of these substances. In some cases, the labels will provide enough information to make an appropriate judgment. If there is not enough information provided on the label, it is the responsibility of the school food service to obtain the necessary information. This guidance suggests it is important to recognize that a child may be provided a meal, which is equivalent to the meal served to other children, but not necessarily the same meal.

In cases of non-severe food allergies, school food service is not required to make food substitutions for them. If the allergy is not described by the child's physician as food anaphylaxis or severe food allergy, it is the decision of the school food service authority regarding whether the accommodations can be made. The school food services may make food substitutions, at their discretion for individual children who do not have severe food allergies, but who are medically certified as having a special medical or dietary need by a physician. In all cases when requested, food labels will be made available to the children and their parents/guardians.