

Food Service in AHSD 25 Schools

Arlington Heights District 25 is proud to offer a voluntary 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 our 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 food labels on file and labels are posted on the website. Ingredient labels may change without warning to AHSD 25. It is ultimately the responsibility of the parent to have the child participate in the meal program or prepare meals at home.

Accommodating Children with Food Allergies

AHSD 25 Food Services wants to create a partnership with parents, teachers, nurses, custodians, kitchen staff, and principals to provide a safe environment for students. We have students with food allergies attending school in our district. Because our Food Service Personnel cannot guarantee that all food served in the general lunch program is allergen-free, parents or students have access to reading food labels to identify these ingredients in the products used by the school cafeterias. In addition to labels being on file and posted on the website, labels are available on pre-packaged a la carte items at point of service. Parents of children with life threatening food allergies who choose for their child to participate in the meal program should request allergen-free meals. Allergen-free meal preparation is in accordance with USDA Guidelines and is clearly labeled with the student's name and which allergen has been removed. Depending on the severity of the allergy, food substitutions may be made as directed by the physician on the required form. Students are encouraged to read labels before consuming any food items.

In addition, parents should be aware that other children in the lunchroom may bring food items containing allergens. If there is an identified need, schools will provide "nut-free" tables for children with nut allergies and an "allergen-free" table for others if necessary.

Children with food allergies can be divided into two categories: SEVERE and NON -SEVERE. A child may also have an 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

Parents are strongly advised to request allergen-free meals for their child with severe allergies if they choose to participate in the meal program or prepare the child's meal at home. Please contact the Food Service Director at 847-758-4904 to request an allergen-free meal.

Please refer to the District 25 Resource Guide For Supporting Students With Life-Threatening Allergies for more information. Please contact me at 847-758-4904 or by e-mail at chinesnewell@sd25.org if you have any questions.

Coletta Hines-Newell
Director of Food Services

References:

USDA, Food and Nutrition Services, Accommodating Children with Dietary Needs in School Nutrition Programs, Guidance for School Food Service Staff

FAAN – Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network

Christine Szychlinski, APN, CPNP, Bunning Food Allergy Program at Children’s Memorial Hospital

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