

Dietary, Cultural or Religious Food Restrictions

Hopewell-Loudon Local School District believes it is our responsibility to serve students with respect and dignity. We are aware there are cultures and religions that observe customs related to diet. We also are aware that some students may have sensitivities to certain food products. To help us meet these needs, we ask that you proceed as described below.

Medical Food Restrictions

Prior to the first day of school, a parent may notify the principal or school designee that their child, for medical reasons, is not able to eat certain foods, with a medical statement signed by a doctor. The doctor's statement is required by the Ohio Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition. The principal or designee will transmit the medical statement to the Food Service Supervisor.

USDA regulations require substitutions or special dietary accommodations in school meals for children whose disabilities restrict their diet. 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:

- Child's disability:
- Major life activity affected by the disability:
- Food or foods to omitted from the child's diet: AND
- Food or foods that must be substituted.

The Hopewell Loudon Local Schools Food Service Department Special Dietary Needs: Eating and Feeding Evaluation form is adapted from the USDA guidance and may be used to obtain the required information from the physician and/or medical authority.

The food supervisor works with parents, the affected children and lunchroom staff providing them with menus, recipes and ingredients for all food prepared and served in our lunchrooms. Depending on the severity of the restrictions, Food Services will make alternative food items available for these students, wherever possible. It also is recommended that parents contact school nurses with any special medical needs regarding their children's conditions.

- **Managing Severe/Life Threatening Food Allergies with Anaphylactic Reactions**
If the physician's assessment indicates that the food allergy may result in severe, life-threatening (anaphylactic) reactions, the child's condition would meet the definition of a "disability." In such cases, the prescribed substitutions by the licensed physician must be made. In addition, a licensed physician must then sign the Special Dietary Needs: Eating and Feeding Evaluation form.

- **Managing Non-Severe Food Allergies and/or Food Intolerance**

The school food authority is not required to make food substitutions for children with non-severe food allergies or food intolerances, who do not have a disability as defined under either Section 504 or the Rehabilitation Act or Part B of IDEA.

Food Services may choose to make food substitutions, at their discretion, for individual children who do not have a disability, but who are medically certified as having a special medical or dietary need. Determinations are made on a case-by-case basis. This provision covers those children who have food intolerances or allergies but do not have life-threatening reactions. In accordance with USDA regulations, students with lactose intolerance or nonlife threatening milk allergy, no other beverage can be substituted for milk. Food Services can no longer replace milk with a juice even with a signed physician's form.

Religious and/or Cultural Food Restrictions

If there is no known allergy, food intolerance or disability, but the parent requests that a specific food be eliminated for religious reasons the parent/guardian may complete the **Hopewell Loudon Local Schools Food Service Department Special Dietary Needs: Eating and Feeding Evaluation** form and return it to the principal or school designee.

A parent concerned about dietary, cultural or religious food restrictions, may also send a letter to the child's school principal or school designee notifying the principal of food restrictions.

The school lunch meal pattern currently allows for flexibility and menu management if personal preferences are given in advance. Furthermore, the daily menu is constructed to offer a non-beef and a non-pork product every day.

Each lunchroom will keep an up-to-date list of all children whose parents have advised principals of dietary, cultural, or religious food restrictions. We will make every effort to comply with the restrictions once we are made aware of them. We are not with any child 100 percent of the time; we cannot guarantee that a child will not eat a restricted item.

We cannot anticipate the needs of all students. Unless we are aware in advance of a child's dietary, cultural or religious restrictions, we may not be able to provide a complete meal.

Parent Responsibilities

It is our expectation that parents will exercise their responsibilities to educate their children with respect to food restrictions. Parents should teach their children to ask lunchroom staff to identify any food items that the children cannot identify.

Parents are encouraged to file with their children's principals the appropriate medical statements or letters prior to their children's first day of attendance at school.

