

# Information on Special Dietary Needs for Parents

## **What are My Rights as a Parent?**

- Every school is required to establish procedural safeguards in regards to special dietary needs. These procedures include the right to:
  - file a complaint if a parent believes a violation has occurred regarding the request for a reasonable modification;
  - receive a prompt and unbiased resolution of the complaint;
  - request and participate in an impartial hearing to resolve their complaints and;
  - receive notice of the final decision and a procedure for review, i.e., right to appeal the hearing's decision.

## **What is a Special Dietary Need?**

- Food substitutions and other reasonable modifications to a student's meal may be necessary to meet the dietary needs of students who meet the definition of a disability.
- Examples:
  - food restrictions, substitutions, texture changes (pureed, ground, chopped, or thickened liquids), increased or decreased calories, and tube feedings
- Conditions or disabilities that might require meal modifications include but are not limited to:
  - autism, celiac disease, diabetes, food allergies, food intolerances, such as lactose intolerance and gluten intolerance, and metabolic disorders.
- These examples of medical conditions are not all-inclusive and some conditions or disabilities may not require meal modifications for all students.

## **What Does Not Count as a Special Dietary Need?**

- Schools are not required to accommodate a dietary request that is requested due to a lifestyle choice or religious reason.
- Examples:
  - Vegan or gluten free diet due to personal choices made by the parent or family and submitting an accommodations request due a child's preferences with specific foods
- It is important to always remember that the purpose of accommodating special dietary needs is to help those students who need changes to their diet due to a medical reason.

## **Why Do Parents Need to Submit a Medical Note?**

- The medical statement form or physician's note is a very important part to ensuring that a student's special dietary need is taken care of adequately. The medical statement form must include:
  - information about the child's physical or mental impairment that is sufficient to allow the school to understand how it restricts the student's diet;
  - an explanation of what must be done to accommodate the student's disability;
  - the food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, when necessary; and
  - signature from a medical professional with prescriptive powers, such as a Doctor, Nurse Practitioner, or Physician Assistant.