

Important Update on Meal Modifications and Dietary Accommodations

Dear Parents and Guardians,

At **CentroNía**, we are committed to providing all children with equal access to nutritious meals that support their health and well-being by following the Child and Adult Food Program (**CACFP**) requirements. In accordance with **federal nondiscrimination laws**, we ensure that children with disabilities who have dietary restrictions are offered **reasonable meal modifications**. This memo outlines our procedures for meal accommodations based on a child's disability or specific dietary need.

Key Points of Our Meal Modification Policy:

1. Meal Modifications for Children with Disabilities

Under federal nondiscrimination legislation (including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)), children with a **disability** that restricts their diet are entitled to reasonable meal modifications to ensure they can fully participate in our program.

- a. **What qualifies as a disability:** A physical or mental impairment that significantly limits one or more major life activities, such as eating, digestion, breathing, or respiratory functions.
- b. **What does not qualify as a disability:** Requests based on general health concerns, personal preferences, or religious/moral beliefs (e.g., avoiding certain foods for non-medical reasons).

2. How to Request a Meal Modification

To request a meal modification for your child, a **medical statement** must be provided and can only be accepted by a licensed healthcare professional (e.g., physician, nurse practitioner). This statement must include: physicians (MD), physician assistants (PA) and certified physician assistants (PAC), doctors of osteopathy (DO), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN)). This statement must include:

- a. A description of the child's impairment and how it restricts their diet.
- b. Specific details about what needs to be done to accommodate the child's dietary needs, including any foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives.
- c. The medical professional's signature.

Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Medical Statements

Acceptable: "Cal is lactose intolerant and cannot drink cow's milk. He should be served soy milk."

Unacceptable: "Serve Sam soy milk."

If any details are unclear or insufficient, CentroNía will work with the medical provider and parents to obtain additional clarification to ensure safe and appropriate meal modifications.

3. Special Diet Requests for Food Allergies or Medical Conditions

For children with food allergies, intolerances, or other medical conditions that require dietary adjustments, we require an **official medical form** signed by a licensed healthcare professional. This form should clearly outline:

- a. The specific food(s) that need to be omitted.
- b. Recommended substitutions or alternatives to ensure the child's dietary needs are met.
- c. Any medical history regarding food reactions or allergies.

These requests should be submitted **before the child's first day at CentroNía**, and the forms must be updated **every 12 months** or whenever changes occur in the child's dietary needs.

4. Milk Substitutions

In line with USDA regulations, milk substitutions will only be made if the child has a medically documented need, such as lactose intolerance or a milk allergy. The request must be supported by a signed medical statement from an authorized healthcare provider.

5. Food Reactions

If you notice any food reactions at home, please notify CentroNía in writing and schedule an appointment with your child's doctor to confirm any potential food allergies. If a reaction occurs at the center, family will be contacted immediately, and a medical note will be required to confirm the dietary needs.

Working Together to Ensure Your Child's Safety and Well-Being

Our goal is to provide a safe, supportive environment where every child can benefit from healthy meals and snacks. Together, we can ensure that your child receives the best possible care.

If you have any questions or need more information about meal modifications or dietary accommodations, please feel free to contact us at **202-332-4200** or **vreis@centronia.org**.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration.

Warm regards,

Victoria Reis

Food and Wellness Program Manager - CentroNía