



255 South Champlain Street, Suite 10, Burlington, VT 05401  
Tel: 802 651 4180 | Fax: 802 658 0983 | [champlainvalleyheadstart.org](http://champlainvalleyheadstart.org)

## Champlain Valley Head Start Meal Modification Request Procedure

### Introduction

This procedure outlines how households can request modifications to accommodate disabilities and how these requests are handled. Meal modifications to accommodate disabilities must be provided at no additional cost to households. Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process.

### Public Notification

Each year, this procedure will be made publicly available to households by posting it on the Champlain Valley Head Start website ([www.champlainvalleyheadstart.org](http://www.champlainvalleyheadstart.org))

### Meal Modification Requirements

Programs must provide modifications to accommodate disabilities. Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, including major bodily functions, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. As a reminder, meal modifications to accommodate disabilities are not limited to food allergies or intolerances. Other examples include food that must be blended to accommodate textural needs or additional food for increased caloric needs.

Participants may also request meal modifications that are for personal reasons and not disability related. This could include lifestyle choices (e.g. vegetarianism and veganism) and religious or cultural preferences. These meal modification requests are not required to be accommodated unless due to an underlying disability. When planning and preparing meals, Champlain Valley Head Start will strive to accommodate personal and religious preferences to the greatest extent possible.

Each modification will be made on an individual, family-by-family basis. However, as required by the Integration clause of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, across all modifications, the Program will strive to accommodate the disability in the most integrated setting possible.

Meals served and claimed for reimbursement must meet all federally established meal pattern requirements. Households may request meal modifications that meet meal pattern requirements. Meal modifications that meet meal pattern requirements are not required to have a medical statement for the meal to be eligible for reimbursement.

**However, the household must provide a written request for the accommodation.**

*\*For example, if a child cannot eat strawberries, but can have all other fruit, a different fruit could be offered for the fruit component. However, it can be helpful to have a medical statement on file for safety reasons!\**

Households that request meal modifications that do not meet meal pattern requirements must be supported by a medical statement. It is recommended that Program operators provide households with the [Vermont Medical Statement Form](#). If this information is already captured in the 504 Plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP), a medical statement is not needed. This documentation must be on file for meals served to be eligible for reimbursement.

Medical statements must include the following information:

- Food to be omitted or avoided
- Brief explanation of how exposure to the food affects the participant
- Recommend substitution
- Signature of the state licensed healthcare professional (or RD in CACFP and School Meals)

If the medical statement is unclear or does not include all required information, the Program must reach out to the household for more information. Medical records or charts will not be requested.

*\*Submitting an updated medical statement each year is not required, but helpful to ensure the most up to date information is on file and to ensure the participant is being served safely and appropriately.\**

To view current meal pattern requirements for the Program(s) operated, please use the links provided below.

- [CACFP Meal Pattern Requirements](#)

Monthly menus are posted on the parent bulletin boards in all Champlain Valley Head Start early learning centers.

### **Requesting a Meal Modification**

Households that need to request a meal modification should contact the child's classroom teacher.

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| • Riverside Early Learning Center      | (802) 540-0361 |
| • Franklin Square                      | (802) 540-3049 |
| • Winooski Early Learning Center       | (802) 399-2495 |
| • St Albans Early Learning Center      | (802) 524-8548 |
| • Addison County Early Learning Center | (802) 388-9881 |

Once a request is made, this information will be communicated to the Site Supervisor,

Center Cook, Teaching Staff, Health Coordinator and Program Resources & Compliance Coordinator. Programs are not required to provide specific brands. Meal modifications made through the written request of a household will be followed.

### **Declining a Meal Modification**

A requested meal modification may be declined if it would fundamentally alter the nature of the meal program. In these instances, the Program Resources & Compliance Coordinator will work closely with the household and the Vermont Agency of Education Child Nutrition Programs before considering this decision. A fundamental alteration is a modification so drastic that it would change the essential nature of the program. In the event a requested modification is not provided, households will be provided the right to:

- File a grievance
- Receive prompt and equitable resolution of said grievance
- Request and participate in an impartial hearing to resolve their grievances
- Be represented by counsel at the hearing
- Examine the record; and
- Receive notice of the final decision and a procedure for review, i.e., right to appeal the hearing's decision.

### **Implementing a Meal Modification**

After a meal modification has been approved, Champlain Valley Head Start staff will work with the family and child(ren) to ensure the modification goes smoothly and that protocols are followed. Approaches could include:

- *regular meetings with the parents/guardians and other applicable personnel*
- *creating a written plan for how the modification or substitution will be handled*
- *ensuring staff are familiar with this process*
- *checking-in periodically to ensure it is an effective plan*

### **Legal Authority**

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- ADA Amendments Act of 2008

### **Regulatory Guidance Documents for Information on Meal Modifications**

- [SP 59-2016 Modifications to Accommodate Disabilities in the School Meal Programs](#)
- [Accommodating Children with Disabilities in the School Meal Programs Manual](#)
- [Policy Memorandum on Modifications to Accommodate Disabilities in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program](#)
- [Vermont Agency of Education Child Nutrition Programs Civil Rights Information](#)



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Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**  
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**  
[Program.Intake@usda.gov](mailto:Program.Intake@usda.gov)

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