

MEAL SERVICES

Pre-K for All programs are expected to follow food standards to ensure that every student is provided nutritious meals.

What You Need to Know

MEAL REQUIREMENTS

You must offer one of the following approved meal patterns to your pre-K students to ensure that their nutritional needs are met:

- Breakfast and Lunch *or*
- Lunch and a nutritious snack

NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The DECE has adopted the guidelines of the New York State Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to set nutritional standards for meals served to Pre-K for All students. In addition to following CACFP standards, you are required to follow the New York City Food Standards for all meals served. (The following meal components reflect required minimum quantities).

- Beverages:
 - Water must be available to children at all meals/snacks and upon request throughout the day.
 - No more than one 4oz. serving of 100% juice per day may be served to pre-K students.
 - You may not serve pre-K students any beverages with added artificial or natural sweeteners.
 - Breakfast
 - One serving of unflavored milk (fat-free or 1%) – $\frac{3}{4}$ cup
 - One serving of a vegetable/fruit or 100% Juice – $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 4oz.
 - One serving of grain/whole-wheat or whole-grain bread- $\frac{1}{2}$ slice or serving
 - Lunch:
 - One serving of unflavored milk (fat-free or 1%) – $\frac{3}{4}$ cup
 - Two servings of vegetables and/or fruits- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup total
 - One serving of grain/whole-wheat or whole-grain bread - $\frac{1}{2}$ slice, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pasta/grains, or $\frac{1}{2}$ tortilla
 - One serving of meat or meat alternative- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
 - Nutritional Snacks:
 - Must include **TWO** of the following:
 - One serving of unflavored milk (fat-free or 1%) – $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
 - One serving of vegetable/fruit or 100% Juice – $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 4 oz.
 - One serving of grain/whole-wheat or whole-grain bread - $\frac{1}{2}$ slice or serving
 - One serving of meat/meat alternative- $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
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- Overall:
 - No food containing artificial trans-fat may be served
 - No use of deep fryers and/or deep frying
 - No fruit canned in light or heavy syrup may be served

For more detailed nutritional requirements, see Appendix A.

PROVIDING MEALS TO STUDENTS WITH DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

Students with medical needs and/or food preferences may require food substitutions or meal pattern modifications to meet their dietary needs. It is important that you follow the guidelines below and understand what menu modifications are mandatory and/or permitted.

- Food Substitutions:
 - When one creditable food item from the planned menu is replaced by another creditable food of the same food component category (e.g. peaches replacing citrus sections)
- Meal Pattern Modifications:
 - Changes to the menu which result in less than the minimum meal pattern requirements being met for food components (e.g. no serving of grain/bread is provided).

Students with Disabilities

Food substitutions and meal pattern modifications are **mandatory** to accommodate participants whose disability restricts their diet as specified in a statement signed by a licensed physician.

- Meal pattern modifications are only permitted if medically necessary for conditions such as diabetes or for potentially life-threatening food allergies
- A medical order is required for meal pattern modifications and must describe:
 - The participant's disability and how the disability restricts his/her diet
 - The major life activity affected by the disability
 - The food(s) to be omitted and the food(s) that must be substituted

Non-Disabled Students

Food substitutions are **permitted but not mandatory** to accommodate a non-disabled student's food preferences, food allergies, or other health concerns.

- Programs should develop a written policy as to whether they will accommodate non-medical dietary requests.
- Students with a doctor's note about lactose intolerance must have a substitute milk product made available to them.

In unique cases, meal pattern modifications are permitted, but not mandatory, to accommodate non-disabled students. In these cases, a medical order must be provided and include:

- The participant's medical or other special dietary need which restricts their diet
 - The food(s) to be omitted and the food(s) that may be substituted
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** In all cases, families may opt to provide meals for their child. Please see FAQ #1 for more information.*

MENUS

On a weekly or monthly basis, you must share a menu with families to provide details about the daily meals and snacks to be served to pre-K students.

It is important that your menu is culturally diverse and meets the needs and preferences of students and families.

Menus must:

- Contain a sufficient amount of detail to be helpful for families.
 - Example: Instead of “fruit,” you should include detail such as “sliced apples.”
- Be distributed home to families in advance and posted prominently in your center.
 - Example: If you prepare your menu on a monthly basis, you should distribute menus to families in the last week of the preceding month.
- Accurately reflect the food that will be served with the note explaining that changes may be made based on what is fresh and available/in season.
- Be provided in the home language spoken by the family.

MEALTIME SERVICES

Meal time is an opportunity for staff members to promote children’s progress in approaches to learning, social-emotional development, healthy habits, fine motor skills, and language development. To facilitate this learning, meals and snacks should be served family-style and provided in an environment conducive to interaction between staff and children.

During meal time, staff should:

- Sit with children
- Promote positive social interactions; students should be encouraged to talk during meal times
- Support children, as needed, to develop skills to feed and serve themselves independently

Children have a role in managing meal time and can participate in distributing supplies, serving themselves, and cleaning up after the meal is finished.

- Pre-K instructional staff members are encouraged to eat the meals/snacks served by your program alongside pre-K students in order to model healthy eating habits.
- **Due to allergy concerns and other dietary restrictions, staff members may not share foods brought from home with pre-K students.**

For additional guidance on staffing requirements and expectations during meal time, please review the [“Program Staffing and Class Composition”](#) Section of the Policy Handbook.

SANITATION REQUIREMENTS

Food safety is an important part of your pre-K program's safety plan. Failure to prepare, store, and serve food in a sanitary and safe manner may lead to harmful health consequences for your students.

You must follow these guidelines in addition to guidance provided by your licensing agency:

- Staff members and students must thoroughly wash their hands before and after handling food.
- All food must be stored in a clean, sanitary environment.
- Food may not be kept beyond the expiration date.
- Food must be covered when transported.
- All food requiring refrigeration must be stored at a temperature below 41° F; prepared hot food must be held at a temperature above 140° F until it is served.
- Dry food must be stored in insect and rodent-proof containers with tight lids.
- Food that leaves the kitchen or food storage area (leftovers, including milk) to be served must be discarded after the meal and may not be re-served.
- Staff members must wear gloves and use proper utensils to handle and serve food.

FOOD PROTECTION CERTIFICATE

In order to ensure that food is served in a safe manner, you must have at least one staff member who holds a "food protection certificate" issued by the DOHMH or an agency acceptable to the DOHMH. The staff member must be on-site to supervise all food storage, preparation, cooking, holding, and cleaning activities, whenever such activities are in progress.

The food protection course is free and available online at:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/services/hanyfood-online.shtml>. You are responsible for the cost of the final exam required to receive the certificate.

FOOD SERVED ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Food provided on special occasions such as holidays and birthday celebrations must:

- Include a healthy option such as fresh fruit and/or vegetable slices.
- Be served with water as a beverage option.
- Be served at the same time as lunch or snack and the program's food must also be served.

The DECE strongly recommends that programs choosing to serve sweets/desserts at special occasions do so in moderation and offer child-sized portions.

You must develop a program policy on whether families will be allowed to provide food to your pre-K students on special occasions. If you choose to allow families to provide food, your policy must include the following:

- That families must provide a list of ingredients included in the food to ensure the health and safety of children with dietary restrictions.
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- That families must provide permission in advance allowing their child to eat food provided by families of other children enrolled in pre-K.
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Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can families provide meals for their children?

Yes, families can provide meals as long as they have been informed that the program is providing a healthy meal and snack for their child at no cost. If a family prefers to provide meals for their child, you are responsible for ensuring that the child's food is properly refrigerated, and that the family is informed of age-appropriate nutritional guidelines.

If a family prefers to provide a meal and/or a snack for their child:

- You should request a note from the child's family indicating that the child will be provided with a meal and/or snack from home
- The note should state that you, the provider, are not responsible for providing the meal and/or snack since the family intends to provide it on a daily basis

Guidance on Family Provision of Meals

The DECE and the CACFP recommend that you encourage families not to send food in with their child for the following reasons:

- Children may expand their food preferences by trying different foods while at Pre-K.
- If the meals are served family style, the child can choose how much and what they want to eat
- Your program's meals may be more nutritious.
- Meal time is more cohesive when all children are eating the same meal. If one child brings in food, it could lead to others requesting the same.

2. Are there any restrictions on where you can purchase food?

The DECE does not place restrictions on the food vendor(s) that you utilize. However, you are responsible for ensuring that all meals and snacks served to children meet the nutritional requirements and fit within your budget.

3. What are some additional recommended best practices to implement during meal times?

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has developed [a Nutrition and Physical Activity Best Practices](#) document that can be referred to for recommendations on meal time best practices.

APPENDIX A: NEW YORK CITY NUTRITION REQUIREMENTS¹

Regulation	Article 47 Center-Based Programs	New York City Food Standards (Required of all programs)	New York State Child and Adult Care Food Program (if participating)
BEVERAGES			
Do not serve beverages with added sweeteners, whether artificial or natural.	✓	✓	✓
Serve only 100% fruit juice.	✓	✓	✓
Do not serve more than 4 ounces of 100% juice a day.	✓		✓
Do not serve juice more than once a day.		✓	✓
Serve only unsweetened/unflavored 1% or non-fat milk to children aged 2 and older. Milk with a higher fat content is allowed when medically required.	✓	✓	✓
Milk substitutes (such as soy milk) must be unflavored.		✓	✓
Specify the type of milk served on the menu. Milk substitutes must be nutritionally equal to milk.			✓
Have water available throughout the day, including at meals.	✓	✓	✓
Serve water with snack if beverage is not one of the required snack components. Specify water on the menu.			✓
MEALS PREPARED AT THE CENTER			
Limit total sodium per day to 1,700 mg or less. Breakfast can contain no more than 425 mg sodium, snacks no more than 170 mg sodium, lunch no more than 600 mg sodium and dinner no more than 600 mg sodium.		✓	
Serve at least 19 grams of fiber per day.		✓	
Limit total fat to no more than 35% of total calories.		✓	
Limit saturated fat to less than 10% of total calories.		✓	
Serve a minimum of two servings of fruits and vegetables per meal for lunch and dinner.		✓	✓
Serve a minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables per day for programs serving breakfast, lunch and dinner.		✓	
<u>Programs serving meals on five days per week or fewer:</u> Offer a minimum of three		✓	

¹ Appendix A is based on the NYC.gov's, "New York City Nutrition and Physical Activity Requirements" chart, which can be found at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/dc/childcare-phys.pdf>.

servings of non-starchy vegetables weekly at lunch and at dinner. <u>Programs serving meals on more than five days per week:</u> Offer a minimum of five servings of non-starchy vegetables weekly at lunch and at dinner.			
Do not deep fry foods.		✓	
FOOD PURCHASED FOR MEAL SERVICE			
Serve low-fat or non-fat yogurt that contains no artificial sweeteners.		✓	✓
Serve items that contain no more than 480 mg sodium per serving.		✓	
Serve sliced sandwich bread with no more than 180 mg sodium per serving. Bread must be whole wheat/whole grain and contain 2 or more grams of fiber per serving.		✓	
Serve other baked goods (such as dinner rolls, muffins, bagels, and tortillas) with no more than 290 mg sodium per serving.		✓	
Serve cereal with no more than 215 mg sodium per serving and at least 2 grams of fiber per serving.		✓	
Serve cereal with no more than 6 grams of sugar per serving.		✓	✓
Limit sweet grains served at breakfast and snack to no more than twice a week.			✓
Do not serve fruit canned in syrup. Serve canned fruit in unsweetened juice or water.		✓	
Serve canned and frozen vegetables and beans with no more than 290 mg of sodium per serving.		✓	
Serve canned and frozen seafood and poultry with no more than 290 mg of sodium per serving.		✓	
Serve canned beef and pork and luncheon meat with no more than 480 mg of sodium per serving.		✓	
Serve portion-controlled items (such as breaded chicken, chicken nuggets, frozen French toast and waffles) with no more than 480 mg of sodium per serving.		✓	
Serve salad dressings with no more than 290 mg of sodium per serving.		✓	
Serve sauces with no more than 480 mg of sodium per serving (except soy sauce).		✓	

Purchase snacks, such as crackers, chips and salty snacks, with no more than 200 mg of sodium per serving.		✓	
Purchase grains (such as granola bars, cookies and muffins) for snacks with no more than 10 grams sugar and at least 2 grams fiber per serving.		✓	
Do not use artificial trans fat. Do not store, distribute or use it to prepare any menu item.	✓	✓	
FOOD SERVED AT CELEBRATIONS			
Do not serve beverages with any added sweeteners, whether artificial or natural.	✓	✓	✓
Give nutritional guidelines for food and drink brought into the child care center to parents.	✓		
Serve health options, like fresh fruit, leafy green salads and/or vegetables slices, at specials occasion celebrations.		✓	
Serve water at all special occasion celebrations.		✓	