

NATURALISTS AT LARGE

www.naturalistsatlarge.com

PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS WITH SERIOUS FOOD ALLERGIES AND DIETARY NEEDS

Food allergies are becoming more and more apparent in students on our programs. Our goal is to ensure the comfort of every one of our participants, but we need your help. Following are some guidelines for you, your child and your child's physician to consider when deciding whether or not to participate in a Naturalists at Large program. We will do everything possible to accommodate your child's needs; however, there are some requests that are simply not possible to honor. We cannot guarantee a peanut, tree nut, gluten, or dairy free environment on any of our programs. We cannot accommodate requests for specific brands of food or ingredients to avoid. We will try to make information available about our food, but the ingredients of certain snacks or entrees may not always be present. Above all else, it is necessary for your child to be personally responsible for their own dietary needs as they would in any environment away from home.

If you or your child is worried about the availability of certain foods, we encourage you to send some of your own for the duration of the program. We will assist your child in the storage and handling of their food. For students with life threatening allergies requiring Epinephrine and/or students who will be sent with supplemental food for the program, we highly recommend assigning a point person from your school to help ensure we are all taking care of your child's needs. In order to better prepare for this experience, please read the following information.

Our programs

Outdoor Learning Centers (OLC): These programs are essentially our tent camping trips with the exception of El Capitan and Camp Gilmore. We provide the food, cooking staff and group cooking gear for this experience. Our cooks are friendly and well versed at working with children. They are also trained as our instructors. We have more control over the items on the menu for these programs; however, it is difficult to know what specific brands of foods we will be able to secure until one or two days before the program. In general, our instructors finish a program on Friday, drive to their next site and stop at a variety of stores on the way to buy food for the trip. This is why it is hard to secure specific brands. We are not sure what we will have until we assess the store inventory.

Lodge Programs: Generally your child will be housed in a cabin for these trips, and the camp that we work with will be in charge of the food for the program. Camps are getting better and better at accommodating various needs and allergies. It will be important for you to have a discussion with the Field Coordinator for this program as soon as possible to secure a menu for this trip, and implement a notification of the need/allergy to the site. Lodge programs generally have a better idea about brands and types of food since their menus are more consistent, and their food provider rarely changes.

Buffet Style

All of our meals are served buffet style. We do not build individual sandwiches, burritos, burgers, etc. for your child. That will be something they do while moving through the buffet line.

This makes it easy for them to avoid the foods that they need to avoid. We also do not premix salads with dressing or other items.

Peanuts

We have adopted a “Peanut sensitive” menu for all of our OLC programs. This means that we will avoid peanuts, peanut butter, and foods that clearly contain peanuts (Peanut butter Captain Crunch for example). We cannot go so far as to avoid foods that have the disclaimer “May have been processed in a facility that processes peanuts” or any other disclaimer of the same nature. We don’t say this to be inflexible. Imagine buying food for 80 students for 5 days for a total of over 1000 meals. It is a big, time-consuming job. For Lodge programs, we cannot control the presence of peanuts, though many lodges and camps will take peanuts and peanut butter off the menu via a request from our Field Coordinator.

Tree-nuts

At the request of the administrator from your school, we will accommodate a “Tree-nut sensitive” menu. All of the stipulations in the Peanut section apply. We feel that this request should be well thought out, because it becomes much more difficult to provide protein for participants who are burning lots of calories during long, fun days.

Dairy Allergies

We provide Soy milk and Rice milk on our OLC menus. Most lodges will provide these items with advance notice as well. Please notify us of dairy allergies so we make sure that we have enough. To be safe, we recommend sending dairy alternatives which we will store and manage. There may be other snacks and foods that your child will want to avoid based on the specific allergy and the intensity of the allergy. (Trail mix with milk chocolate for example.) For more severe dairy allergies or whey allergies, specific discussions with NAL will be important. It will be likely that sending alternatives from home is the best way to proceed.

Gluten

For a wheat or gluten free menu it is best to talk with the Field Coordinator at Naturalists at Large about the menu for your program and see the menu page on our website. The Field Coordinator can tell you which meals will be served, and you can use the menu page as a guide for supplementing. We will assist in the management and handling of this food to the best of our ability. You can expect the following items on the menu for any of our OLC programs: Corn Flakes for breakfast, Fritos and corn chips for snacks, corn tortillas and corn chips for burrito dinner.

Food Handling

We will ice your child’s cooler on tent-based programs, or find refrigerator space on our lodge-based programs. Many of our lodge-based programs have microwaves, which can give you more options for providing easy-to-cook meals that resemble the items on the menu. It is best to send your child with a cooler and/or box of food packed with prepackaged, ready-to-eat style meals that require little or no preparation. For items that are available to supplement our menu, please take the time to individually bag those items and label them by meal. You may notice that your child brings some of this food back home. If that is the case, it is likely because your

child was able to eat the food we served based on the brand and ingredients, not because it wasn't made available.

Your child will have access to this food during our working hours, and any time they need in the event of an emergency. It is important that this food does not accompany them to bed at most of our sites due to the likelihood of critter visitation. We will show your child and a representative from the school where their food will be day and night. In the night time it will be secured in a food storage bin, facility, or one of our vehicles.

Your child should always feel comfortable in asking our chefs or Program Coordinators to access their food, or any other items that they have previously seen on the menu. If we have leftovers that are safe to eat, they are welcome to them. It is important that they speak up for themselves if they are not getting the sustenance they need, and we will do everything we can to provide a welcoming platform for that interaction.

Celiac disease

We will take as many steps as we can to avoid cross-contamination issues, but as you most likely know, Celiac disease can be difficult to manage. Avoiding cross-contamination issues while cooking in the outdoors can be especially difficult. We cannot provide separate utensils, bowls, pots, wash basins, etc. in order to avoid this. We can attempt to set up the buffet lines in order to limit this problem, but there is no guarantee that it will suffice. More dialogue with your Field Coordinator will be important for your decision to place your child on this trip. Above all else it should be an informed decision made by you and your physician.

Anaphylaxis

All of our instructors are trained in basic first aid and CPR, and many hold a Wilderness First Responder Certification. Advanced notice of your child's allergy is important. We most likely will receive this information by talking to you and the faculty in charge of the program, and we also require a list of medical red flags from your school. Using this list, we will pair our most highly trained staff with the students who carry Epi-pens for possible anaphylactic reactions. Provided the prescription is for your child, the particular instructor or faculty present has specific training in the diagnosis, use, and administration of Epi-pens, and we have express permission from you to administer the drug, we will do so if we deem it an anaphylactic reaction. The faculty on the program will be the first to administer if they have the training and certification. You are welcome to provide this medical direction in a letter to us, via your physician, or by specifying this on the prescription drug form that will be sent to you by the school.

It is up to you and your Doctor to decide whether your child's allergy is too serious to keep them safe on a program with us. We encourage any student with a prescription for Epinephrine to bring two full doses with them to the program. Your child should carry one dose, and the school faculty in your child's trail group should carry the other.

Consult your Field Coordinator in regards to ambulance response times, hospital drive times, and other specific logistical concerns in regards to your child's specific site.