

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



Standard Operating Procedures

Policy Name: Alternative Entrée Program		
Policy Number: 409.04.28	Effective Date: 10/13/2020	Page Number: 1 of 8
Authority: Commissioner	Originating Division: Executive Division (Georgia Correctional Industries - Food and Farm Services)	Access Listing: Level I: All Access

I. Introduction and Summary:

The Vegan and Restricted Vegan meal options have been chosen as the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) Alternative Entrée Program Meal Plans (AEP). These meal options were developed to allow GDC to accommodate as many religions as possible. This policy is intended to provide guidelines pertaining to the purchase, preparation, and service of alternative meals at GDC feeding units which operate kitchens for the preparation and service of these particular meals. Exceptions may be made for contracted food service operations.

II. Authority:

- A. United States Constitution, First and Fourteenth Amendments;
- B. Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA), 42 U.S.C. Section 2000cc, *et seq.*; and
- C. ACA Standard: 5-ACI-5C-07 (ref. 4-4319), 5-ACI-4B-18 (New Aug. 2018), 4-ALDF-4A-10, and 4-ACRS-4A-03.

III. Definitions:

- A. **Vegan** - Free of animal products, by-products, or blood.
- B. **Vegan Meal Plan** - Meal plan consisting of Vegan food items that are prepared separately from regular menu items to avoid any contact with Non-Vegan foods.
- C. **Restricted Vegan Meal Plan** - Meal plan consisting of Vegan food items that are prepared separately from regular menu items to avoid any contact with Non-Vegan foods. Cold meals will be served on Saturday with this meal plan. Requirements of the Vegan Meal Plan will also apply.
- D. **Non-Vegan** - Any food that contains animal products, by-products, or blood. Examples include meat, milk, and eggs.

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E. **Alternative Entrée/Meal Request Form** - Form signed by an offender that requests participation in GDC's Vegan or Restricted Vegan Meal Plan option. Refer to Attachment 1, Inmate Alternative Entree Meal Participation Form.

IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:

A. Handling Requests for AEP:

1. All offender requests relating to the AEP are considered based on the security interests of the facility. The least restrictive means approach should be applied when an AEP request may result in a security issue or disruption to normal operation. The least restrictive means approach accommodates or provides alternatives instead of complete bans.
2. Each facility shall have a designee to receive AEP requests and shall process requests for the AEP immediately.
3. Alternative meals are provided to an offender in restrictive housing on an individual basis, is based on health and safety consideration only, and meets basic nutritional requirement. Alternative meals, provided to an offender in restrictive housing, must have the written approval of the Warden or Superintendent or Designee and the facility Health Care Authority or Designee.

B. GDC provides the following AEPs:

1. **Vegan Meal Plan:** This meal plan shall be provided at select sites statewide. Offenders who request an Alternative Entrée Meal Plan but are assigned to facilities which do not facilitate this program, will be transferred to a facility participating in the Vegan Meal Plan within fifteen (15) days from approval of the request. Participation in this meal plan shall be reviewed annually.

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2. Restricted Vegan Meal Plan: This meal plan will be provided at select sites statewide. This meal plan will correspond with the Vegan Meal Plan except after sunset on Friday until one (1) hour past sunset on Saturday, when cold foods shall be served. Participation in this meal plan shall be reviewed annually.
 - a. Kitchen design and available equipment for the preparation of a Restricted Vegan Meal Plan will be used in determining sites.
 - b. Offenders who request a Restricted Vegan Meal Plan when not assigned to a facility that serves Restricted Vegan Meal Plans will be transferred to a facility that provides this meal plan within fifteen (15) days from approval of the request.
 - c. The Restricted Vegan Meal Plan is available to all offenders with approval of a written request. Refer to Attachment 1, Offender Alternative Entree Meal Participation Form. This request must be submitted in writing to the facility's designee describing the specific beliefs and practices which would require the offender to be placed on a Restricted Vegan Meal Plan. The request must explain why and how the regular Vegan Meal Plan is insufficient to meet the offender's needs. These requests shall be reviewed by the facility's designee within two (2) business days. If approved, the request shall be forwarded to the facility's Regional Director to coordinate transfer if the offender is not at a facility that offers the Restricted Vegan Meal Plan.
 - d. All Meal Plan requests received by the facility designee that cannot be placed into a Restricted Vegan or Vegan Meal Plan must be forwarded to the facility's Regional Director and the Director of Chaplaincy Services for approval. The Director of Chaplaincy Services will consult with Legal Services, Facilities Division and Food and Farm Services on the feasibility and approval of the request.

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C. Vegan Meal Plan Preparation:

1. All foods prepared and served as part of the GDC Vegan Meal Plan program will be certified as animal product free.
2. Foods will be prepared in a way that will not contaminate the food products with animal products.
 - a. All recipe ingredients must be free of animal products.
 - b. A separate food preparation area shall be utilized.
 - c. New pots, pans, and utensils shall be utilized for this meal plan and care must be taken not to contaminate food items or equipment with animal products.
 - d. Food and Farm Services will supply all food items on the regular Master Menu that are normally received from Food Distribution Unit (FDU) in a Vegan format.
 - e. The Vegan Meal menu will be served on a separate serving line and shall be consumed in either the main dining hall, on detail, or in isolation cells.

D. Restricted Vegan Meal Plan Preparation and Service:

1. All foods prepared as part of the GDC Restricted Vegan Meal Plan program must be Vegan and free from animal products and by-products.
2. Food products will be prepared in a way that does not contaminate the food product by contact with Non-Vegan foods. All recipe ingredients must meet Vegan standards.

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3. Food products shall be prepared with separate utensils and equipment that are not used to prepare regular meals.
 - a. Utensils, trays, etc. utilized as part of Restricted Vegan Meal Plan program cannot be used for any other purpose and should be stored separately and designated as use for Alternative Entrée Meal Plans only.
 - b. Facility dishwashers cannot be used to wash utensils, trays, etc. utilized in the Restricted Vegan Meal Plan program.
 - c. All food items normally received from FDU for the GDC Regular Master Menu will be supplied in a Restricted Vegan form by Food and Farm Services.
 - d. All Restricted Vegan foods will be served on, in or with designated trays, cups, tumblers, sporks, etc.
 - e. All food will be stored in a way that prevents contact with Non-Vegan foods or utensils and equipment that have come in contact with Non-Vegan food. A separate storage area for Vegan and Restricted Vegan food items is preferred. If Vegan and Restricted Vegan items are unable to remain in their original packaging, they must be placed in container designated for these food items or double wrapped with plastic wrap.
 - 1) Restricted Vegan foods should not come in contact with other foods.
 - 2) Prepared Restricted Vegan foods will need to be stored separately from non-Restricted Vegan foods.
 - f. Food and Farm Services will make the final determination if special or new equipment is needed.

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- g. The following foods are naturally considered Restricted Vegan: water, fruits, vegetables canned in their own juices, and fresh vegetables that have been thoroughly inspected for bugs.
 - h. Restricted Vegan foods may not be cooked, heated, or re-heated from sunset on Friday to one (1) hour past sunset on Saturday. Cold food will be served during this time.
4. All AEP menus will be prepared and certified by Food and Farm Services Central Office Registered Dietitian. These Master Menus will be followed statewide.

E. AEP Meal Service:

- 1. All offenders will be required to show their identification cards at the point of service to receive their AEP meals.
- 2. Trays for offenders on lockdown will be identified with offender's name, cell location, and identification number. All parties involved in the preparation, transportation and service of the AEP will take precaution to not contaminate food items, trays, and utensils.
- 3. Offenders on the AEP should be fed as they arrive to serving line with the regular population. These individuals should not be fed first, last, or with medical diets unless strict facility procedures are enforced.
- 4. All requests to be removed from an Alternative Entrée meal plan should be completed in writing using Attachment 2, Alternative Entrée Meal Discontinuation Form. If an offender requests to sign up for the AEP after discontinuing participation, they shall not be allowed to do so for a minimum of sixty (60) days after initial discontinuation.

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5. All aspects of the AEP must be taken seriously as to meet the requirements of the Restricted Vegan or Vegan nature of GDC's Master Menu.

F. Coordination with Medical Diets:

1. If an offender requesting to participate in the AEP is on or is in need of a medically prescribed diet, the medical diet should take precedence. However, these types of requests will need to be submitted in writing describing the offender's medical need for the diet and how the Vegan Meal Plan will not meet his medical needs. (Example: Offender has liver disease and requires a 50-gram protein diet, Vegan Meal Plan provides 95 grams of protein).
2. These requests should be submitted to the facility's Chaplain or designee immediately. These requests will need to be forwarded within two (2) business days to the Food and Farm Services Central Office Registered Dietitian for review. At that point, it will be determined if the Vegan Meal Plan can or cannot accommodate the offender's medical needs.
3. In some incidences, the offender may have to be transferred to a facility where they can better accommodate his medical needs and religious preferences.

G. Special Meals on Religious Holidays:

1. All Religious Holiday requests must be submitted in writing to the Chaplain or designee at each facility forty-five (45) calendar days prior to the requested holiday date. The request must be submitted in writing with specific beliefs and practices described to the Chaplain or designee, which would require the offender to have special accommodations. The request must also explain why and how the regular Vegan Meal Plan is insufficient to meet the offender's needs. These requests should be reviewed by the Chaplain or designee within two (2) business days and then forwarded to the

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facility's Regional Director, Legal Services, and the Director of Chaplaincy Services. Each religious holiday request will be reviewed on a case by case bases.

H. Removal from the Program for Non-compliance:

1. Any offender who misses seven (7) or more meals in a seven (7) day period may be removed from the program.
2. Any offender who misses fifteen (15) or more meals in a thirty (30) day period may be removed from the program.
3. Any offender who is caught picking up a regular tray after being signed up for the AEP may be removed from the program.
4. Any offender who is caught purchasing Non-Vegan items from the offender store may be used as a basis to be removed from the program.

V. **Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Offender Alternative Entree Meal Participation Form

Attachment 2: Offender Alternative Entree Meal Discontinuation Form

VI. **Record of Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:**

Upon completion, Attachments 1 and 2, shall be kept in a local filing area in Food Service for one (1) year in an active file and five (5) years in an inactive file, then destroyed.