



School Lunch Survey Results

In June 2008, the ACDA launched a survey to learn about the availability of gluten-free lunches for students with celiac disease. The survey was sent out via email, listservs, websites and newsletters. Based on the rapid rate of response over 1000 in less than 10 days, parents have been waiting to share their views, in this case frustrations, on this topic. Overall 2229 surveys were completed. Families weighed in from 49 states, Puerto Rico, Canada, and as far away as Germany.

What we learned came as no surprise.

Over 90% of families send their child to school with a GF lunch. School officials routinely tell parents their child either does not qualify for gluten-free lunches or the school simply will not provide them. Perhaps as a result of this attitude from the schools, the majority of families don't approach their school about special diet accommodations for celiac disease thinking that they will be turned down as well.

The encouraging news: some children with celiac disease do have 504 plans and have been able to obtain GF lunches. What that proves is - when schools are pressed to review their responsibility under the law, they realize they are *required* to accommodate the gluten-free diet, and have done so. Without question, these schools are in the minority. The ACDA and its members are working to see that **all** schools offer this plan to students with celiac disease.

The ACDA, whose members include the nation's leading celiac centers, the largest gluten-free food manufacturers, and national support organizations, took up this fight months ago. In July 2008, we presented [testimony](#) at a congressional hearing held by the House Education and Labor Committee. The hearing focused on the rising cost of foods to the school lunch program. Our statement noted that even before the recent economic difficulties, schools were not willing to incur the cost of gluten-free foods making it almost impossible for children with celiac disease to obtain their medically required diet. It was the first time, anyone had pointed out there was a problem. Our members will speak to USDA officials, in the coming weeks and urge the agency to advise schools to comply with the National School Lunch Program's mandate to accommodate special diets when that need is medically documented. The results of the survey will also be shared with the USDA.

Parents are the best advocates for their children. At the local level, you and other families are the agents of change. In some communities the ability to effect change will come easier than in others. Our section, ["Students with Celiac Disease,"](#) includes a [model 504 plan](#), [physician statement](#) and other key information to assist you in this effort.

Number of Responses by State					
AK	8	LA	5	OR	46
AL	13	MA	65	OH	56
AR	8	MD	95	OK	15
AZ	51	ME	14	PA	98
CA	172	MI	52	RI	7
CO	41	MN	33	SC	12
CT	54	MO	40	SD	7
FL	65	MS	5	TN	54
GA	68	MT	3	TX	236
HI	1	NC	65	UT	54
IA	13	NE	11	VA	50
ID	14	ND	7	VT	5
IL	88	NH	15	WA	71
IN	56	NJ	121	WI	31
KS	18	NM	9	WV	1
KY	9	NV	6	WY	3
		NY	214		