

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Alternative Entrée Program

**Policy Number:** 409.04.28

**Effective Date:** 12/11/2024

**Page Number:** 1 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Executive Division (Georgia  
Correctional Industries - Food  
and Farm Services)

**Access Listing:**  
Level I: All Access

**I. Introduction and Summary:**

The Alternative Entrée Program Packaged Meal plan is currently provided by the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) Alternative Entrée Program. This program was 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. 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 Standards: 5-ACI-5C-07; 5-ACI-4B-18; 5-ALDF-4A-10, and 4-ACRS-4A-03.

**III. Definitions:**

As used in this SOP, these terms are defined as follows.

- A. **Alternative Entrée Program (AEP)** - Alternative meal option for offenders requiring a request form to be completed to participate.
- B. **Non-Vegan** - Any food that contains animal products, by-products, or blood. Examples include meat, milk, and eggs.
- C. **Offender Alternative Entrée Program Packaged Meal Participation Form** – A form that is completed and signed by an offender to request participation in GDC’s Alternative Entrée Program. Refer to Attachment 1.
- D. **Vegan** - AEP Meal Plan that is free of animal products, by-products, or blood.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Alternative Entrée Program

**Policy Number:** 409.04.28

**Effective Date:** 12/11/2024

**Page Number:** 2 of 7

**Authority:**  
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**IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:**

A. Handling Requests for Alternative Entrée Program (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. An offender cannot participate in the program until their request has been processed and approved.

B. GDC provides the following Meal Option for the AEP:

1. Alternative Entrée Program Packaged Meal Plan. This meal plan shall be provided at all GDC Facilities. Participation in this meal plan shall be reviewed annually.
  - a. The AEP Packaged Meal is available to all offenders with an approved Attachment 1, Offender Alternative Entrée Program Packaged 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 an AEP Packaged 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. Offenders cannot participate in the program until the process is completed. If approved locally, then the request shall be forwarded to the facility's Regional Director.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Alternative Entrée Program

**Policy Number:** 409.04.28

**Effective Date:** 12/11/2024

**Page Number:** 3 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
Executive Division (Georgia  
Correctional Industries - Food  
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- b. All AEP Packaged Meal Plan requests received by the facility's designee 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 GCI Food Services on the feasibility and approval of the request.
- c. If an offender is not approved at any point in the above process, the section responsible for denying approval shall communicate to the facility's designee, who, in turn, will communicate with the offender and ensure the offender is not placed on the program.

**C. AEP Packaged Meal Plan Preparation:**

1. All foods prepared and served as part of the GDC AEP Packaged Meal Plan program will be animal product free, animal by-product free, and Kosher certified. Halal-certified foods will be utilized when available.
  - a. A separate food preparation area shall be utilized.
  - b. 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 and non-Kosher products.
  - c. GCI Food Services Division will supply all food items utilized on this program. All food preparation and packaging of the meal items will occur in the Alternative Entrée Program Production Kitchen. Once packaged, these items will be stored properly until shipped to the facilities with participants.
  - d. The AEP packaged meals will be served on a tray with all meal components and shall be consumed in either the main dining hall, on detail, or in isolation cells.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Alternative Entrée Program

**Policy Number:** 409.04.28

**Effective Date:** 12/11/2024

**Page Number:** 4 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

**Originating Division:**  
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- e. Food products will be prepared in a way that does not contaminate the food product by contact with non-Vegan foods or non-Kosher foods. All recipe ingredients must meet Vegan and Kosher standards. Halal certified food will be utilized when available.
  - f. Trays utilized as part of AEP Packaged 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.
  - g. Facility dishwashers cannot be used to wash utensils, trays, etc. utilized in the AEP Packaged Meal Plan Program.
  - h. GCI Food Services Division will make the final determination if special or new equipment is needed for the heating process.
  - i. The following foods naturally meet the guidelines for the AEP Packaged Meal Plan Program: water, fruits, vegetables canned in their own juices, and fresh vegetables that have been thoroughly inspected for bugs.
2. All AEP menus will be prepared and certified by GCI Food Services Division Central Office Registered Dietitian. These Master Menus will be followed statewide.

**D. AEP Package Meal Plan 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 precautions to not contaminate food items, trays, and utensils.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Alternative Entrée Program

**Policy Number:** 409.04.28

**Effective Date:** 12/11/2024

**Page Number:** 5 of 7

**Authority:**  
Commissioner

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3. Offenders on the AEP should be fed as they arrive to the designated area to pick up their trays. 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 Program should be completed in writing using Attachment 2, Alternative Entrée Program Packaged Meal Removal Form. If an offender requests to sign up for the AEP Program after discontinuing participation, they shall not be allowed to do so for a minimum of sixty (60) days after initial discontinuation.
5. All aspects of the Alternative Entrée Program must be strictly followed to adhere to and maintain the integrity of the program.

E. Coordination with Medical Diets:

1. If an offender requesting to participate in the AEP is on or needs 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 Alternative Entrée Program Packaged Meal Plan will not meet his medical needs. (Example: Offender has liver disease and requires a 50-gram protein diet, Alternative Entrée Program Packaged 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 Alternative Entrée Program Packaged Meal Plan can or cannot accommodate the offender's medical needs.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Alternative Entrée Program

**Policy Number:** 409.04.28

**Effective Date:** 12/11/2024

**Page Number:** 6 of 7

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F. 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 Alternative Entrée Program Packaged 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 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.

G. 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:**

- A. Attachment 1: Offender Alternative Entrée Program Packaged Meal Participation Form

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Policy Name:** Alternative Entrée Program

**Policy Number:** 409.04.28

**Effective Date:** 12/11/2024

**Page Number:** 7 of 7

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B. Attachment 2: Offender Alternative Entrée Program Packaged Meal Removal 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 shall be kept five (5) years in an inactive file, then destroyed; copies of Attachments 1 and 2 will placed in the offender's institutional file.