

## CLASSROOM FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Meal service means different things to each person due to family upbringing and cultural differences. Therefore, the following guidelines have been developed to ensure compliance with the Federal Performance Standards and the regulations for the Office of Child Care Services.

1. Children set tables with supervision. Placement of the settings gives children experience with understanding number concepts and following directions. They are taught to wash their hands before and after meals and to hold utensils by the handles.
2. Food is served in age appropriate bite-sized portions or is soft enough to cut with the edge of the fork. Some foods like hamburgers and chicken patties are served as half sandwich for Head Start and in strips for Early Head Start.
3. All food is placed in serving dishes at the beginning of the meal so that children may serve themselves. If the table is too full, food can be held aside, but must be visible to the children.
4. Prayer is not included in the daily Head Start mealtime activities. If the teaching staff wishes to do a group recitation, the children are seated with staff and may hold hands and use a saying such as; "Isn't it nice to enjoy this meal with a friend". After doing so, children serve themselves food. A child or staff person who wants to say a silent prayer is welcome to do so, however, this is not to be a group recitation.
5. As soon as the children serve themselves, they are allowed to eat their food. Guidance should be provided to the children on how large a serving of each food item is, so that there is enough for everyone.
6. Children are not required to try all food provided. They are encouraged to try the different foods by staff and other children through positive talk about the food. It is the child's choice as to what s/he chooses to eat.
7. Food is not used as a punishment or reward.
8. Teaching staff and other participating adults take the same serving size as the children. This allows the children to model after the adults.
9. There should always be enough food for each child to have seconds. If there is not, a call should be placed to the kitchen and additional food will be brought to the classroom. In some cases a food substitution will be made. **Teachers should always encourage children to eat additional servings of vegetables and fruits in place of the higher calorie entrees** (especially if a child has had thirds or more of the entrée).
10. The teaching staff and parents volunteering in the classroom sit and eat with the children for the duration of the meal or snack. Other Head Start staff, if they are actively involved in the classroom activities, may eat the meals served to the children and sit at the table with the children. Just like the children staff are not required to eat food that they do not like or have a medical, philosophical, or religious reason for not eating. Food should never be discussed in a negative manner. If questioned staff should say they "do not like the food yet" and explain they may learn to like it at any point. For medical, philosophical, or religious reasons staff can

explain however they feel comfortable to the children why they are not eating a food. It may be as simple as “it makes me sick”.

11. Children are given sufficient time to eat their food, minimum of 20 minutes. In some cases a child may need additional time to eat the meal.
12. The schedules for breakfast, lunch, and snack are to be posted on the daily schedule in the classroom.
13. Mealtime is an opportunity for the children to interact with their peers and teaching staff in a relaxed atmosphere and to enhance their social skills.
14. Mealtime provides staff with the opportunities to foster children’s language development. Discussions might include colors, textures, and categories of food being eaten. However mealtime discussion does not need to focus on food. Conversations can be about daily events, future events, or the children can lead the discussion in another direction. Ideally, this is the time to build vocabulary and language skills.
15. As new foods are introduced in the weekly menu, teaching staff are encouraged to prepare the children by including the new food into the weekly curriculum of the classroom.
16. Children help in the preparation of snacks when possible.
17. When spilling occurs, children clean up after themselves with minimal assistance.
18. As children finish their meal, they clear their places of dishes and utensils, leave the table and choose available activities.
19. Food should never be eaten away from the table. All food is to be eaten while in the Head Start program and should never be sent home with the children.
20. Tooth brushing after eating is an important part of the daily classroom routine and should be scheduled after at least one meal.
21. Children are to feed themselves whenever possible. For a child with a disability, the dietitian will work with the parents, special education supervisor and appropriate staff to purchase the appropriate adaptive equipment to encourage self-feeding.
22. All staff, classroom volunteers, foster-grandparents and students must know about food allergies, restrictions, and dietary modifications for each child.
23. Teachers are the managers of the classroom. They are to ensure that all volunteers, grandparents, and students are aware of the rules of the classroom. Any person working in the classroom needs to know the current food allergies, and the menu options made for these children.
24. Children serve themselves as much as possible. This includes pouring milk. If milk is poured from a pitcher, any remaining milk must be discarded at the end of the meal. Milk *cannot* be poured back into the original container. Meals should be monitored to ensure that all required components are present.

25. Children should not be waiting at the table for the meal to be served or delivered. Children should be engaged in a quiet activity prior to mealtime. Appropriate transitions should be made between an activity and mealtime.
26. Ensure that all food is disposed of properly. Teach children not to throw non-disposable plates and utensils into the trash. Classroom staff should monitor this and retrieve any dishware or utensils that have been thrown out using gloves.
27. All children and staff are to wash their hands prior to mealtime.
28. Teaching staff should use disposable gloves during the set-up, when serving foods that must be handled with their hands (such as ready to eat foods, sandwiches, bread, whole fruit, etc.). Remember: gloves never replace proper hand washing.
29. Tables should be cleaned and sanitized prior to and after the meal. Tables must be disinfected at the end of the day. Follow the cleaning and sanitation procedures.
30. Leftovers are to be discarded. For safety reasons, no food is to be left out at room temperature.
31. Mealtime is a time to develop self-help skills.
32. A child with Failure To Thrive (FTT) should have an adult sit by their side at all meals. This adult should help encourage the child to eat in a positive way by giving assistance when necessary.