Family Style Meals

**APPROACH:**

Head Start/Early Head Start will ensure that the nutritional services settings contribute to the development and socialization of enrolled children.

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<tr>
<th>HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:</th>
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<td>1302.44 (1) (2)</td>
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<tr>
<th>OREGON DAYCARE LICENSING REQUIREMENT</th>
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<td>FOOD SERVICE</td>
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<td>414-300-0280(7)</td>
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**PROCEDURE:**

- Teaching staff plays a major role during center mealtime. Meals will be served on a schedule in compliance with the USDA guidelines and EHS/Head Start Performance Standards.
- Infants and young toddlers will be fed “on demand” to the extent possible.

Food-related activities and leisurely times provide opportunities for:

- The development of positive attitudes toward healthy food.
- Decision-making, sharing and communication with others.
- Development of muscle control and eye-hand coordination.

**Mealtime Procedure:**

1. The first meal eaten at the center (breakfast or lunch) is served within the first 30 minutes of class start time.
2. Staff will assist children in washing their hands before the start and at the end of the scheduled mealtime.
3. Children will be encouraged to help set the tables as developmentally appropriate. Small plates can be used for breakfast and snack. Large plates must be used at lunch. Napkins are for wiping hands and mouths and are not a substitute for dishes.
4. In order to ensure good appetites and a relaxed mealtime environment, calming transitional activities will be planned before meals.
5. The mealtime environment is adapted to meet all children’s varying
developmental needs and different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

6. Infants are held while being bottle-fed (refer to the “Infant Feeding” procedure).

**Staff Modeling During the Meal:**

1. Children and qualified staff will eat together family style and share the same menu.
2. Staff on special diets may eat their own food brought from home on break or after children leave.
3. Qualified staff should model appropriate mealtime behavior and set good examples by demonstrating a positive attitude toward all food served.
4. Children will be fed in an open, relaxed and accepting atmosphere.
5. A qualified staff member must be seated at each meal service table with children. Their role is to:
   - To encourage children to try all components of the meal.
   - To assist children who need help serving themselves.
   - To model good eating habits and manners.
   - To engage children in conversation so mealtimes are pleasant experiences.
   - To respond quickly in the event of a child choking.

Conversation at the table between children and adults helps set an appropriate pace to the meal while at the same time establishing a pleasant environment. Topics can vary and not only be related to food and nutrition. Some methods for facilitating mealtime discussions include:

- Asking open-ended questions, modeling good listening skills, and encouraging turn taking in conversation.
- During the mealtime, it is encouraged to have interesting and pleasant table conversations appropriate to children’s interests. Topics are not limited to food and nutrition. Discourage talk about personal food dislikes.

**Meal Service Safety**

Choking is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among children, especially those aged 3 years or younger. Food, coins, and toys are the primary cause of choking-related injury and death. Certain characteristics, including shape, size, and consistency, of certain toys and foods increase their potential to cause choking among children.

To ensure a rapid response in the event of a choking incident, one qualified staff member must remain seated with children during meal service. The role of that staff member is to monitor children eating at the table to ensure they are taking small bites, eat slowly and chew their food carefully to prevent choking.

If a child is “mildly ill,” a provision for serving that child shall be provided. Any leftover food which was brought to the table but not eaten must be discarded.
Restroom Needs and Child Supervision

A. Restrooms in Classrooms (Approved by OCC on 9/9/19)

On occasion, a child may need to use the restroom during meal times. If the restroom is located within the classroom, one child at a time (ages 3 – 5 only) is permitted to use the restroom without being accompanied by an qualified staff according to the following procedure.

Procedure:

1. During meals, qualified staff position themselves at each table so they can easily see the classroom restroom in order to directly supervise children.

2. The qualified staff at the table acknowledges the child’s restroom need by stating the child’s name out loud and states he/she is going to the restroom. Only one child at a time is permitted to use the restroom during meal service.

3. A child using the restroom during meal times is accounted for by all adults supervised by all qualified staff seated at the meal service tables.

4. As the child returns to the table, the qualified staff at the child’s table announces his/her return in order to inform the other adults in the classroom.

B. Restrooms outside of Classrooms (Approved by OCC on 9/9/19)

A qualified staff member must accompany a child to a restroom located outside of a classroom. During meal service, when qualified staff must leave the table to accompany a child(ren), the other qualified staff seated at tables are informed so they can supervise children at the table that is now without the qualified staff member.

C. Mealtime Requirements

Table accommodations for eating shall comply with OAR 414-300-013 regarding staff/child ratios.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Children</th>
<th>Staff: child ratio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 weeks of age and under 30 months</td>
<td>1:4</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 months old to attending kindergarten</td>
<td>1:10</td>
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- The table must be cleaned and sanitized before the meal begins and after the meal ends.
- Hot food must be kept at 140 degrees F. or warmer, and cold food must be kept at 41 degrees F. or colder, until served. Food should be covered until served.

- Separate serving portions are used for each table. The tables, chairs, and eating utensils will be age appropriate.

- Serving utensils, tongs, etc. are distinct from eating utensils. Eating utensils are suitable in function, size, and shape for use by children.

- If a child asks for water during the meal, they may get up to get a drink of water, although no water is allowed at the table.

- Children will be encouraged to serve themselves the required portion size and pour their own milk from covered pitchers.

- Staff should observe children for eating patterns that may indicate undiagnosed problems (trouble chewing, gorging, etc.) and report these to the Health Director per the Health Observations procedure.

- Children should be allowed sufficient time to eat. Those who become restless before the meal is over may be allowed to leave the table, taking plates to the cleaning area and then participating in a quiet activity.

- When the individual needs of a particular child vary from expected meal-eating patterns, staff should consult with the child’s parents and the Health Director for further guidance.

- Food from family style serving bowls/platters and all food brought to the table shall be discarded after meal service.

- Children will scrape their plates at the end of the meal, and the resulting garbage will be removed daily.

- Food will be cut into shapes and sizes that are easy for young children to manage and which will reduce the risk of choking.

- Food will not be used as punishment or reward, children are encouraged to try new foods, but not forced to eat or taste food.

- Meals are sampled periodically by designated staff for continuing improvement of meal service.