

52. HIGH INTENSITY DAILY ACTIVITIES: Mealtime Management and Providing Meals Policy and Procedure

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Purpose

This policy and procedure demonstrates Australian Quality Care's commitment to ensuring all participants are provided with tasty, nutrient-based meals to maintain life and good health, and reduce the risks of malnutrition and dehydration.

Scope

It applies to all Australian Quality Care's staff and meets relevant legislation, regulations and Standards.

Applicable NDIS Practice Standards and NDIS High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors

Risk Management

Outcome

Risks to participants, workers and the provider are identified and managed.

Indicators

- Risks to the organisation, including risks to participants, financial and work health and safety risks, and risks associated with provision of supports are identified, analysed, prioritised, and treated.
- A documented risk management system that effectively manages identified risks is in place and is relevant and proportionate to the size and scale of the provider and the scope and complexity of supports provided.
- The risk management system covers each of the following:
 - incident management
 - complaints management and resolution
 - financial management
 - governance and operational management
 - human resource management
 - information management
 - work health and safety and
 - emergency and disaster management.

Mealtime Management

Outcome

Each participant requiring mealtime management receives meals that are nutritious, and of a texture that is appropriate to their individual needs, and appropriately planned, and prepared in an environment and manner that meets their individual needs and preferences and delivered in a way that is appropriate to their individual needs and ensures that the meals are enjoyable.

Indicators

- Providers identify each participant requiring mealtime management.
- Each participant requiring mealtime management has their individual mealtime management needs assessed by appropriately qualified health practitioners, including by practitioners:
 - undertaking comprehensive assessments of their nutrition and swallowing
 - assessing their seating and positioning requirements for eating and drinking
 - providing mealtime management plans which outline their mealtime management needs, including for swallowing, eating, and drinking and
 - reviewing assessments and plans annually or in accordance with the professional advice of the participant's practitioner, or more frequently if needs change or difficulty is observed.
- With their consent, each participant requiring mealtime management is involved in the assessment and development of their mealtime management plans.
- Each worker responsible for providing mealtime management to participants understands the mealtime management needs of those participants and the steps to take if safety incidents occur during meals, such as coughing or choking on food or fluids.
- Each worker responsible for providing mealtime management to participants is trained in preparing and providing safe meals with participants that would reasonably be expected to be enjoyable and proactively managing emerging and chronic health risks related to mealtime difficulties, including how to seek help to manage such risks.
- Mealtime management plans for participants are available where mealtime management is provided to them and are easily accessible to workers providing mealtime management to them.
- Effective planning is in place to develop menus with each participant requiring mealtime management to support them to:
 - be provided with nutritious meals that would reasonably be expected to be enjoyable, reflecting their preferences, their informed choice and any recommendations by an appropriately qualified health practitioner that are reflected in their mealtime management plan and
 - if they have chronic health risks (such as swallowing difficulties, diabetes, anaphylaxis, food allergies, obesity or being underweight) – proactively manage those risks.
- Procedures are in place for workers to prepare and provide texture-modified foods and fluids in accordance with mealtime management plans for participants and to check that meals for participants are of the correct texture, as identified in the plans.
- Meals that may be provided to participants requiring mealtime management are stored safely and in accordance with health standards, can be easily identified as meals to be provided to particular participants and can be differentiated from meals not to be provided to particular participants.

Definitions

Dysphagia - difficulty with swallowing. Symptoms include:

- difficulty biting or chewing on food
- coughing or choking on food or fluid and
- food or drink falling from a person's mouth.

Dysphagia is associated with a wide range of disabilities and health conditions, and symptoms can worsen as people get older¹.

Nutrition – is taking in and using fuel in the body via eating and drinking, digestion and absorption. Effective nutrition requires people having food and fluids that provide enough energy and key nutrients for growth and repair.

Swallowing Difficulty - difficulty swallowing foods or liquids, arising from the throat or oesophagus, ranging from mild difficulty to complete and painful blockage.

Texture-modified Foods and Fluids - meals or drinks that have been prepared in a way that creates a certain texture or consistency. They can make swallowing easier and potentially reduce the risk of choking or aspirating (inhaling food and water in the lungs). Texture-modified foods and fluids are often

¹ *Dysphagia, Safe Swallowing, and Mealtime Management Practice Alert*, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, November 2020

used to help people with dysphagia eat and drink safely.

Undernutrition - occurs when the body does not get enough energy or nutrients for good health or is unable to utilise energy or nutrients because of digestive problems or illness. Undernutrition (malnutrition) may result in starvation.

Policy

Australian Quality Care respects each participant's right to have their nutrition and hydration needs met as part of the care and support they receive.

Australian Quality Care staff are expected to treat all participants in receipt of meal services respectfully and ensure their preferences are of importance, in addition to making sure they have enough to eat and drink to meet their nutrition and hydration needs (including support to eat and drink where needed).

Australian Quality Care staff strive to provide meal services that involve the participant as much as possible to maintain their independence and connection to their identity.

Participants who require mealtime management are identified and included in the assessment, development, and regular reviews of a *Mealtime Management Plan*.

Procedures

Mealtime Management Assessment, Planning and Review

Australian Quality Care will undertake appropriate nutritional and meal support assessments with each participant as per the *Assessment, Planning and Review Policy and Procedure*.

Australian Quality Care's assessment, planning and review processes must identify participants who require mealtime support, including participants who have health needs that require specific mealtime management support. Where required, the Speech Pathologist undertaking assessments must be qualified to undertake assessments relating to complex mealtime management support.

Where an existing or potential health need is identified that could impact a participant's health or safety during mealtime, the participant must be supported to undergo an assessment by an appropriately qualified health practitioner. This may include:

- a dietician to:
 - undertake a comprehensive assessment of the participant's nutrition or
 - investigate nutrition requirements
- a speech pathologist to:
 - undertake a comprehensive assessment of the participant's swallowing
 - outline a plan for safe food, liquid, and medication intake
 - undertake a comprehensive dysphagia assessment, which may include invasive assessments or
 - determine the level of food and fluid texture modification required
- a doctor to:
 - investigate any underlying cause of swallowing issues and advise on treatment options and limitations of care or
 - work with the participant, Australian Quality Care and other stakeholders to explore ethical considerations around non-oral feeding options such as nasogastric tube or PEG feeding
- a pharmacist to:
 - carry out a medication review (some medication side effects can impact on a person's swallowing process) or
 - recommend an alternative route for medication administration
- a physiotherapist to work with the speech pathologist to advise on appropriate and safe positioning to facilitate safe swallowing or

- an occupational therapist to provide advice on environmental modifications to facilitate food and fluid intake.

In all cases, Australian Quality Care must involve the participant, and with the participant's consent, their support network and relevant health practitioners (such as the participant's nutritionist or dietitian), in initial and ongoing decision making relating to meal services.

Assessments, planning, and reviews relating to mealtime services must include the participant and consider:

- assessments and mealtime management plans provided by health professionals that outline their mealtime management needs, including for swallowing, eating, and drinking
- what is needed to sustain life and support ongoing good health
- their regular/usual eating habits
- how they self-manage their food and fluid intake (if applicable)
- how much they are eating, and how they are eating
- any behaviour, cognitive and communication challenges
- required food and fluid consistency
- equipment needs
- positioning needs
- communication needs
- environmental needs
- community considerations (for instance, when eating outside the home, such as at a restaurant or barbeque, etc.)
- any dietary intolerances, allergies, medication contraindications or potential risks when providing meals
- the level of support or help they need and want
- identify risks and how to manage them
- their preferences, and religious and cultural considerations and
- the timing of mealtimes.²

Service Delivery

Training

Prior to providing meal services, and depending on the type of meal service they are providing, staff supporting participants with meal services must be trained in:

- food handling and preparation
- implementing *Mealtime Management Plans* or other recommendations for swallowing safely or mealtime management
- how to prepare and provide safe, enjoyable meals
- how to identify and respond to early signs and symptoms of dysphagia and how to support people with dysphagia to have safe and enjoyable meals
- the mealtime management needs of specific participants and the steps to take if safety incidents occur during meals, such as coughing or choking on food or fluids
- specific participant preferences and needs/goals for nutrition and hydration and
- proactively managing emerging and chronic health risks related to mealtime difficulties, including how to seek help to manage such risks.

Staff responsible for the planning, preparation and presentation of meals should, where possible, be matched with each participant based on their experience and skill level in relation to meal services.

² Services and Supports for Daily Living | Requirements. (2022). *Guidance and Resources – Standard 4*. [Internet]. Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. Canberra, ACT. Available at: <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/guidance-and-resources-providers-support-aged-care-quality-standards> [accessed 15 August 2022]

Meal Planning

Australian Quality Care undertakes the following types of meal planning with participants:

- individual, one on one planning to identify meals staff will cook, or help participants to cook, in their home, or
- a set menu, developed with participants / Australian Quality Care provides a menu, developed with participants, that participants can choose from]

Staff responsible for meal services must plan menus in collaboration with participants, so that meals provided:

- are nutritious and enjoyable
- reflect the participant's preferences and informed choice and
- align with any recommendations by health practitioners that are included in the participant's *Mealtime Management Plan*.

Planning should also support participants who have chronic health risks (such as swallowing difficulties, diabetes, anaphylaxis, food allergies, obesity or being underweight) to proactively manage those risks.

Staff providing meal services are responsible for ensuring participants' preferences are implemented and communicating with participants should alternative arrangements need to be made (and obtaining their agreement). Staff must review participants' *Mealtime Management Plans* when planning, preparing, and delivering meals ensuring they have read, interpreted and implemented the plans accurately.

Australian Quality Care staff must ensure participants are supported to maintain the highest level of autonomy that is possible during mealtimes, based on their preferences, health, and abilities. This includes participants contributing towards menu planning and sharing their ideas and experiences. Staff must work with each participant to encourage and support them to do as much for themselves as they can.

Where Australian Quality Care provides opportunities for participants to dine together, a communal atmosphere will be created through shared dining spaces, shared recipes and meal preparation (where appropriate) and shared responsibilities (for example setting of tables etc).

Staff are responsible for documenting any changes in the participant's meal intake and condition/health.

Any feedback relating to changes to a participant's meal intake or condition/health must be provided to the Care Manager for review and further action, such as escalation/referral to a health practitioner.

Participants should be encouraged to remain actively involved in providing feedback in relation to meal services and Australian Quality Care staff are to welcome new recipes and dining ideas. Australian Quality Care's staff and the [Position Title] are responsible for discussing formal or informal feedback with participants about their meal services and whether it is meeting their needs (in addition to any formal Feedback and Complaint processes).

Mealtime safety issues, including for people with dysphagia, should be regularly considered in staff meetings and addressed

Meal Preparation and Delivery

Meals must be provided in accordance with any *Mealtime Management Plan* in place, as well as the preferences of each participant.

Staff must not prepare or deliver meals for participants who do not have a documented *Mealtime Management Plan*, or for participants who require modified meals or fluids and whose *Mealtime Management Plan* is not based on an assessment and advice from an appropriate health professional.

Where required, staff should consult with the Care Manager to seek additional support from participants' health practitioners, to ensure they prepare and provide texture-modified foods and fluids appropriately and know how to check that meals are of the correct texture.

All meals must be presented in such a way that they are appealing visually, and texturally, and are familiar to each participant.

Meals must also be of an appropriate quantity and prepared to a high quality, with plating and equipment provided that reflects the participant's mealtime requirements (for instance, modified eating utensils provided where this has been recommended by an occupational therapist to support the participant to eat independently).

To ensure delivered meals are meeting participants' needs, Australian Quality Care will undertake regular reviews to gauge the quality and safety of the food being delivered. Results from these surveys will inform Australian Quality Care's subsequent meal planning and delivery services.

Mealtime Interventions for Risks

All staff who are involved in meal preparation, delivery, or assistance must be aware of the risks involved for each participant, the strategies to prevent them and interventions to implement should they occur. This information must be detailed in participants' *Mealtime Management Plans* and be based on assessments and advice from participants' multidisciplinary teams.

All participants must be monitored when eating to enable staff to identify and respond to risks (such as choking or aspiration).

Staff are to respond to participant's risks and implement strategies based on the participant's *Mealtime Management Plan* and their scope of practice. Some health professionals have within their scope of practice the ability to increase food or fluid modification in response to a risk. For example, if a participant were coughing while drinking fluids, an RN could increase the fluid thickness temporarily until the participant could be assessed by a speech pathologist. Agreed responses to mealtime risks must be based on attending staff members' scope of practice.

Should a participant show any sign or symptom of swallowing difficulty, staff should support them to consult a GP and speech pathologist as soon as possible, for an assessment of their swallowing and mealtime needs, as well as review their general health. Appropriately trained staff should be available to monitor people with dysphagia during mealtimes.

In all cases, appropriate escalation processes must be included in all *Mealtime Management Plans* to support responses to participant risks.

Should a mealtime risk or incident occur, staff must respond as per Australian Quality Care's *Incident Management Policy and Procedure* and ensure the participant's *Mealtime Management Plan* and *Support Plan* are immediately reviewed and updated.

Labelling and Storage

All meals prepared for participant consumption should be stored in accordance with the guidance provided in Australian Quality Care's *Food Storage and Preparation Policy and Procedure*.

Before delivering or serving a pre-prepared meal, staff must ensure the label on the participant's meal matches the requirements set out in their *Mealtime Management Plan* and *Support Plan*.

Supporting documents

Documents relevant to this policy and procedure include:

- *Support Planning and Service Agreement Collaboration Policy and Procedure*
- *Support Planning Policy and Procedure*
- *Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure*

- *Mealtime Management Plan*
- *Service Agreement and Support Plan*
- *NDIS Commission Practice Alert: Dysphagia, Safe Swallowing and Mealtime Management*
- *NDIS Commission Practice Alert: Medicines Associated with Swallowing Problems*

Monitoring and review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed at least annually by the Board. Reviews will incorporate staff, participant and other stakeholder feedback, where relevant.

Australian Quality Care's *Continuous Improvement Plan* will be used to record improvements identified and where relevant, will be incorporated into service planning and delivery processes.

Document Control

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1	19/12/2024	Kelly Masterton
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