



Policy and Procedures Manual

MEALTIME MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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1.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy and procedure protects the rights and well-being of NDIS participants who require, or might require, mealtime management and mealtime assistance.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors involved in programs that develop, implement or deliver mealtime management support.

2.0 RISKS

NDIS participants with difficulty eating face risks to their health, sense of wellbeing and their right to exercise choice and control.

Several health risks arise when people have difficulty swallowing, eating or drinking. One aim of mealtime management is to reduce the likelihood of associated health problems such as choking, respiratory problems, heartburn, and weight loss.

NDIS participants' sense of wellbeing and control can be at risk if mealtime management plans do not consider their personal taste and enjoyment.

These risks are greater where eating difficulties have not been identified and addressed by suitably qualified health practitioners. Risks may emerge if staff do not comply with the requirements of a mealtime management plan.

RISK TREATMENTS: Staff should be aware of the risks and be able to identify when participants have difficulty eating. Mealtime management plans should be developed and implemented in a way that recognises participants' rights and their physical, psychological and social needs. Staff must understand and monitor the signs of chronic illness associated with eating difficulties and, if necessary support participants to address those issues by working with appropriate health practitioners. Staff must also refer to the advice of practitioners as contained within a mealtime management plan.

3.0 POLICY

Our organisation recognises the risks faced by NDIS participants who have difficulty eating.

We will ensure that relevant staff understand the risks faced by participants with eating



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difficulties.

We will ensure that relevant staff can identify the signs of chronic illness associated with eating difficulties and know how to respond appropriately.

We recognise the rights of participants to engage in and exercise control over the support they receive.

We recognise that eating difficulties must be addressed by suitably qualified health practitioners.

We recognise that participants and their supporters have valuable experience and expertise about participants' preferences, risks and risk treatment strategies.

We will support participants to engage with health practitioners to establish mealtime management plans.

We will support the relevant staff to understand how to safely and respectfully implement mealtime management plans.

We will ensure that relevant staff are aware of the emergency responses and incident management processes.

3.0 PROCEDURE

Developing mealtime management plans

Staff will identify participants who require mealtime management by (where appropriate):

- working with participants and their supporters to identify needs,
- including participants' mealtime requirements in the intake assessment process,
- being aware of the signs and symptoms associated with eating difficulties,
- supporting participants who have difficulty swallowing to promptly consult relevant health practitioners.

Where the health practitioner advises developing a mealtime management plan, staff will support the participant:

- as needed, with consent and as directed by the participant,
- to engage with the health practitioner/s in developing a plan,
- to include the participant's supporters in developing a plan.

Staff will ensure that the mealtime management plan is implementable and provides:



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- an assessment of the participant's swallowing, postural requirements and other mealtime management needs,
- dietary and nutritional advice, as appropriate,
- recommendations on food types and preparation techniques, including participant's preferences and informed choices,
- recommendations on delivery equipment (spoons, straws, etc.) as suitable for various foodstuffs,
- recommendations on environmental considerations (noise, light etc.)
- observations and recommendations about the effect of medications,
- guidance for staff implementing the plan, as appropriate,
- guidance on identifying mealtime incidents or health risks,
- guidance on reacting to mealtime safety incidents and emergencies that are more likely to occur (such as choking or coughing),
- guidance on how the participant communicates about eating difficulties, where appropriate,
- strategies for managing chronic health risks (such as swallowing difficulties, diabetes, anaphylaxis, food allergies, obesity or being underweight) where appropriate,
- a date for when the plan and assessment should be reviewed
- indicators to trigger earlier or more frequent reviews.

Implementing plans

The mealtime management plan will be easily accessible to staff providing mealtime management.

Staff will implement the plan at all stages of the mealtime management process.

Staff will work with participants requiring mealtime management (and health practitioners where appropriate) to develop menus that:

- are in line with the advice of the consulting health practitioners,
- are nutritious and of a texture appropriate to the participant's needs,
- reflect the participant's preferences and choices,
- proactively manage chronic health risks, where appropriate.

Staff will:



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- prepare meals in line with the mealtime management plan,
- prepare and store meals safely, and in accordance with health standards:
 - with attention to hygienic personal practices;
 - ensuring that meal preparation environment and equipment are clean;
 - ensuring that foodstuffs are fit for consumption;
 - ensuring that meals are stored safely and hygienically;
 - ensuring that the delivery equipment (cups, straws, bowls, etc.) are safe and hygienic.
- store and identify meals in a way that ensures participants:
 - only receive meals prepared in accordance with their mealtime management plan;
 - do not receive meals that are outside of their plan.
- deliver meals prepared as specified in the mealtime management plan (i.e., of the appropriate consistency, temperature, nutritional value, etc.);
- use delivery equipment and methods that are:
 - appropriate to the participant's needs;
 - appropriate to the type of food;
 - likely to ensure the meal is enjoyable.
- monitor the participant during the mealtime in order to act on signs of distress or discomfort.
- regularly seek feedback from the participant about the meals, delivery and mealtime management plan.

Staff capabilities and training

Staff responsible for providing mealtime management to participants will be supported to understand the principles of mealtime management:

- the risks to participants who have difficulty swallowing,
- the symptoms and signs associated with swallowing difficulties,
- risks associated with not following the mealtime management plans,
- common terminology related to mealtime preparation and modified meals,
- how to read, interpret and implement mealtime management plans,



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- food preparation methods and requirements for common conditions e.g. people with dysphagia,
- procedures and methods for including medication in food where this is required by the mealtime management plan including crushable/non-crushable medication,
- the processes involved in preparing food for safe consumption, including:
 - food preparation hygiene,
 - correct consistency of texture-modified meals and other foodstuffs and fluids,
 - suitable delivery methods and equipment.
- arrange/support postural requirements;
- how to identify and report mealtime incidents and health concerns.

Staff responsible for providing mealtime management will be provided specific support to understand:

- the needs and preferences of individual participants,
- the advice and recommendations of the health practitioners responsible for developing the mealtime management plan,
- how to identify and report mealtime incidents and health concerns relevant to individual participants.

These competencies will be refreshed during supervision and team meetings as appropriate.

These competencies will be assessed and monitored as per the staff Performance Review process. (see *Human Resources Policy*)

Reviews

Participants' mealtime management plans will be reviewed:

- yearly,
- more frequently as recommended by the consulting health practitioner,
- immediately, when a relevant incident has occurred or a related chronic health condition has emerged,
- immediately, if requested by the participant.