

GRAB AND GO LESSON

Happy Mealtime Self-Check

Topic Area: Nutrition and Management
Subtopic Area: Happy Mealtimes

Objective: Recall some key areas for improving meal service in child care.

There are many practices to promote healthy eating in the child care setting, such as following Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern requirements, providing a variety of foods, understanding why and how children make food choices, and serving family style meals. One way to know if your practices are ideal for promoting healthy eating habits is to complete a routine checklist.

Consider using the checklist below. It features some key practices for serving meals in supportive and positive environments. Place a check next to the box that best describes your current practice. When you have completed the checklist, use it to identify which practices you need to work on to improve meal service.

Checklist for Enhancing Nutrition and Family Style Dining	Not Very Often	Most of the time	Always
I follow the Child and Adult Care Food Program meal patterns.			
I plan menus to emphasize variety, color, and texture.			
I choose different foods so the same foods are not served several days in the same week.			
I schedule meals and snack times for every 2 to 3 hours.			
I have an establish a routine that transitions from active play and mealtime.			
I use child-sized bowls, plates, containers for beverages, and serving pieces to enable children to self-serve.			
I make sure children and staff wash their hands with running water and soap before meals.			
I select meals family style by allowing children to serve themselves with your assistance.			
I place all the food and beverages on the table at the same time.			
I allow the children to choose the foods and the amount they want to eat.			
I encourage children to try new foods, but never force them to eat foods.			
I eat with the children at the table.			
I eat with the children at mealtimes to build skills, habits, and table manners.			
I avoid comments about how much of how little a child has eaten.			

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References:

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Family style meals: A new way to teach healthy eating habits*. Retrieved from <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/sfsp/SMT-FamilyStyleMeals.pdf>

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