

## CENTER MEAL POLICY

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**PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE: (1304.23) Child Nutrition** – Mealtimes are designed to promote the physical, social, cognitive and emotional development of children and to increase knowledge about healthy eating.

### **OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES:**

#### **General information** –

1. Breakfast is served at the contract time per class. Lunch is served at the contract time per class. Snack is served at contract per class. Classroom staff must ensure that all children are seated and ready to eat at these times in accordance with Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines.
2. Breakfast will last approximately 20 minutes, lunch 30 minutes, lastly the snack will last about 15 minutes. Clean up procedures may begin before, but each child will have ample time to eat, per the approved time at each meal.
3. Any children who have not received breakfast by the time they arrive will be offered/ served a nourishing breakfast.
4. All children, assigned classroom staff and volunteers eat together family style and share the same menu to the greatest extent possible. This includes **SNACK**.
5. Except for water, other food and drinks are not allowed in the classrooms in between meals.

#### **Quality and Quantity of Food** –

1. All meals are planned according to USDA-CACFP/ Missouri Eat Smart food requirements for each meal. The program uses a Cycle Menu, planned by our parents. A qualified Registered Dietitian analyzes and approves the menus. Any change from the planned menu requires prior approval from the Nutrition Coordinator.
2. Meals are prepared from recipes in the Head Start Cookbook. Recipes are based on preparing 30 meals per classroom for Head Start classrooms with 18 children and two adults. The serving size for Early Head Start is 10 servings over the amount of children licensed for that room and 3 teaching staff. (If an Early Head Start classroom has 8 children plus 3 adults that's 11, plus 10 additional servings makes 21servings). When portions are served that are halved round up the number of portions. (example a sandwich 22 halves, 11 sandwiches would be served instead of 21 halves) Quantities prepared for lunch/snack may be adjusted based on the breakfast count each morning. (Inclement weather as an example).
3. Food service employees must be notified by breakfast, of any extra people that will eat lunch that day. Meals may not be available for volunteers or staff if not included by breakfast.
4. If special events are planned, notification must be far enough in advance that extra food can be purchased on the regular food delivery day.
5. Food service staff shall mark each food item with the proper serving size before it is delivered to the tables. Classroom staff will instruct children how to serve themselves the appropriate amount of food.
6. Foods served will be high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar and salt.
7. Some foods will not be served at Head Start due to their nutritional make-up (candy) or the risk of choking hazards (nuts, seeds, popcorn, hotdogs, etc.).
8. Early Head Start Children will not be served foods that are considered choking hazards for their age group (peanut butter, certain raw vegetables such as carrots and broccoli, canned cubed pineapple, etc.)

### **Before Meals –**

1. In order to ensure good appetites and a relaxing mealtime environment, calming transitional activities will be planned before meals.
2. Children and adults must wash their hands using the 20-second wash with warm, soapy water prior to mealtime.
3. Complete place settings will be used at breakfast and lunch regardless of the menu. Teaching children proper table setting.
4. Staff will give each child a plate with their napkin and utensils to carry to their place setting. The glass can be added as children develop in their skills. Children will be taught to carry, walk and reach over their chair to place them on the table.
5. Table helpers will help set the food and drink on the tables and assist the staff as directed.

### **During Meals –**

1. Meal-related activities and discussion will provide opportunities for decision-making, responsibility, sharing, communication and fine motor skills.
2. Food will not be used as a punishment or reward. Each child will be encouraged but not forced to eat or taste their food.
3. Using the serving bowls or platters, food will be passed after appropriate comments or instructions from staff.
4. The **Childplus Form 2315 Daily Attendance/Meals Served Worksheet** must be filled out during the meal. The teacher is responsible for ensuring that the form is correctly completed prior to the children leaving the table.

### **After Meals –**

1. As children are dismissed from the table, staff will ensure that the children learn to place only clean items on the top shelf of the cart and only dirty items on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shelves. For example, wrapped food that was not used, milk jugs and clean place settings will be placed on the top shelf only to avoid contamination.
2. Children and adults will clean the tables as outlined in the Food Safety and Sanitation Policy.
3. Children and adults will wash their hands as described above.

### **Other Staff, volunteers and Visitors –**

1. FRS's are expected to eat in the classroom and assist with meals each day unless given permission by their supervisor to take a lunch hour for a specific day.
2. Other staff, volunteers and visitors are encouraged to eat in the classroom with the children. However, there is no guarantee that food will be available unless the extra numbers are given to the kitchen as part of the am count.
3. Food service employees will monitor classrooms during meals and must eat lunch in the classroom with the children. All Head Start meals must be shared in a family style environment in the classroom with the children.
4. No one is permitted to eat in the kitchen.
5. Area Supervisors will eat in the Head Start classroom at least once a month and complete a meal review survey.