

## Module 2: Safety, Health, Nutrition

### Section C: Nutrition

#### Introduction

Mealtimes can influence young children's attitudes about healthy foods and eating habits that last a lifetime. Child care nutrition programs provide opportunities for children to learn about healthy eating patterns, mealtime behaviors, and communication skills. Early childhood teachers provide a role model by eating nutritious foods and displaying appropriate mealtime behaviors. Mealtimes in child care centers can provide young children with meal time routines that encourage healthy habits and developing relationships. In this section you will learn about implementing best nutrition practices for an early learning program including infant feeding and family style meal service for toddlers, preschool, and school-age children.

#### Learning Objectives

After you complete this section you will be able to:

- Explain mealtime routines for the age group of children in your classroom (infants, toddlers, preschool, and school-age children).
- Describe your role in providing nutritional snacks and meals.
- Explain how you can promote healthy eating and nutrition in your classroom.
- Explain what family style meal service means in child care.

#### Guiding Your Learning

**As you work through this section** think about establishing mealtime routines for your new classroom. What are some ways that you can encourage young children to eat nutritious foods?

**NOTE: The information contained in these sections are partial summaries of the DHS Child Care Licensing Regulations, are not intended to replace or provide an official interpretation of the Arizona Administrative Code and Arizona Revised Statutes for Child Care Facilities.**

## Summary of Key Arizona Child Care Licensing Standards

### **R9-5-502 Supplemental Standards for Infants**

C. This section provides regulations on infant feeding policies and procedures including preparing and cleaning of bottles, staff holding the infant during bottle feeding, and feeding infants solid food.

### **R-9-5-507 Supplemental Standards for Children with Special Needs**

C. Provides regulations on developing an individualized plan for children with special needs including feeding and nutrition.

### **R9-5-508. General Nutrition Standards**

A. A licensee shall:

1. Make breakfast available to an enrolled child who is present at a facility before 8:00 a.m.,
2. Serve lunch to an enrolled child who is present at a facility between 11:00 a.m. through 1:00 p.m., and
3. Serve dinner to an enrolled child who is present from 5:00 p.m. through 7:00 p.m. and who will remain at the facility after 7:00 p.m.

B. A licensee shall serve the following meals or snacks to an enrolled child present at a facility for the following periods of time:

1. If an enrolled child is present two to four hours, one or more snacks;
2. If an enrolled child is present during any of the meal times stated in subsection (A), a meal that meets the meal pattern requirements in subsection (C);
3. If an enrolled child is present four to eight hours, one or more snacks and a meal;
4. If an enrolled child is present nine or more hours, two snacks and one or more meals; and
5. Before bedtime, one snack.

C. If a licensee provides food, a licensee shall prepare and serve food according to the meal pattern requirements found in Table 5.1, "Meal Pattern Requirements for Children."

D. If an enrolled child's parent provides food for the parent's enrolled child, the licensee shall provide milk or juice to the enrolled child if not provided by the parent.

E. If a licensee plans and serves meals, the licensee shall ensure that the meals:

1. Meet the age-appropriate nutritional requirements of an enrolled child; and
2. For each calendar week, provide a variety of foods within each food group from the meal pattern requirements.

F. If a licensee provides food, the licensee shall maintain on the facility premises at least a one day supply of food needed to provide the meals and snacks required by subsections (B) and (C) to each enrolled child attending the facility.

G. In addition to the required daily servings of food stated in subsection (C), a licensee:

1. Shall make second servings of food available to each enrolled child at meals and at snack time,
2. May substitute a food that is equivalent to a specific food component if second servings of the specific food component are not available, and

3. Shall ensure that a food substitution in subsection (G)(2) is written on the posted weekly menu by the end of the meal or snack service

### **SEE TABLE OF MEAL PATTERN REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILDREN**

#### **R9-5-509 General Food Service and Food Handling Standards**

##### **C.**

1. Enrolled children, except infants and children with special needs who cannot wash their own hands, wash their hands with soap and running water before and after handling or eating food;
2. A staff member:
  - a. Washes the hands of an infant or a child with special needs who cannot wash their own hands before and after the infant or child with special needs handles or eats food using:
    - i. A washcloth,
    - ii. A single-use paper towel, or
    - iii. Soap and running water; and
  - b. If using a washcloth, uses each washcloth on only one child and only one time before it is laundered or discarded
3. An enrolled child is not permitted to eat food directly off the floor, carpet, or ground or with utensils placed directly on the floor, carpet, or ground;
4. A staff member encourages, but never forces, enrolled children to eat food;
5. A staff member assists each enrolled child who needs assistance with eating;
6. A staff member teaches self-feeding skills and habits of good nutrition to each enrolled child as necessary;
7. Lunch and dinner are family-style meals as demonstrated by at least one of the following:
  - a. Food is served from a serving container on the table where enrolled children are seated;
  - b. Enrolled children serve themselves, independently or with the help of a staff member, from a serving container on the table where enrolled children are seated;
  - c. Enrolled children pass a serving container from individual to individual;
  - d. In a facility where lunch or dinner is provided by the facility, a staff member sits at the table and eats the lunch or dinner with enrolled children; or
  - e. In a facility where each enrolled child brings the enrolled child's own lunch or dinner, a staff member sits at the table with the enrolled children and eats the staff member's own lunch or dinner;
8. Fresh milk is served from the original, commercially filled container, to a container used for meal service or a cup, and unused portions are not returned to the original container;
9. Milk served to an enrolled child older than two years of age is fat-free or 1% lowfat milk unless the enrolled child's parent requests otherwise;
10. Reconstituted dry milk is not served to meet the fluid milk requirement;
11. Juice served to children for a meal or snack is full-strength 100% vegetable or 100% fruit juice from an original, commercially filled container or reconstituted from a concentrate according to manufacturer instructions;
12. Fruit juice served to an enrolled child is limited to the following amounts:
  - a. For an enrolled child younger than six years of age, four ounces per day; or
  - b. For an enrolled child six years of age or older, six ounces per day;
13. A beverage sweetened with any kind of sugar product is not provided by the facility;
14. Each staff member is informed of a modified diet prescribed for an enrolled child by the child's parent or health care provider, and the modified diet is posted in the kitchen and in the child's activity area;

15. The food served to an enrolled child is consistent with a modified diet prescribed for the child by the child's parent or health care provider;
16. An enrolled child is not permitted in the kitchen during food preparation or food service except as part of an activity;
17. An enrolled child does not use the kitchen or a food storage area as a passageway;
18. A staff member:
  - a. Prepares a weekly menu at least one week in advance,
  - b. Includes on the menu the specific foods to be served on each day,
  - c. Dates each menu,
  - d. Posts each menu at least one day before the first meal on the menu will be served, and
  - e. Writes food substitutions on a posted menu no later than the morning of the day of meal service;
19. Non-single-use utensils and equipment used in preparing, eating, or drinking food are:
  - a. After each use:
    - i. Washed in an automatic dishwasher and air dried or heat dried; or
    - ii. Washed in hot soapy water, rinsed in clean water, sanitized, and air dried or heat dried;  
and
  - b. Stored in a clean area protected from contamination;
20. Single-use utensils and equipment are disposed of after being used;
21. Perishable foods are covered and stored in a refrigerator at a temperature of 41° F or below;
22. A refrigerator at the child care facility maintains a temperature of 41° F or below, as shown by a thermometer kept in the refrigerator at all times;
23. A freezer at the child care facility maintains a temperature of 0° F or below, as shown by a thermometer kept in the freezer at all times; and
24. Foods are prepared as close as possible to serving time and, if prepared in advance, are either:
  - a. Cold held at a temperature of 45° F or below or hot held at a temperature of 130° F or above until served; or
  - b. Cold held at a temperature of 45° F or below and then reheated to a temperature of at least 165° F before being served.

## Nutrition Services

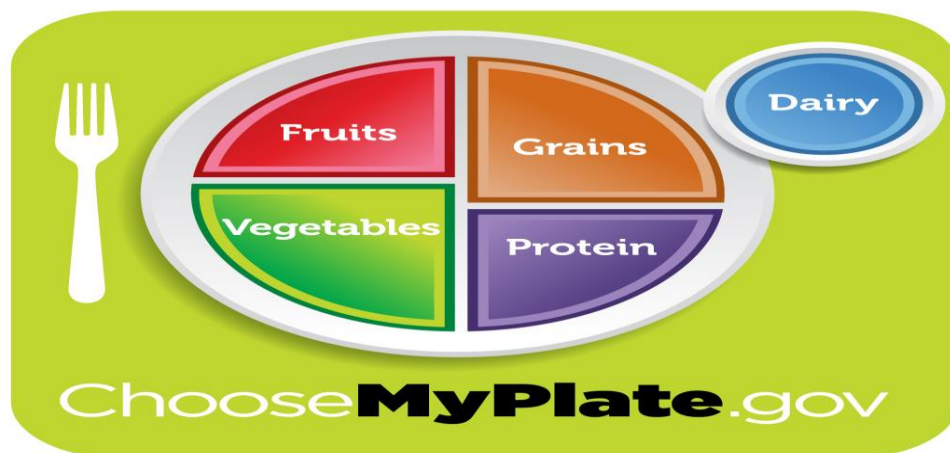
We all enjoy eating our favorite foods. The sense of taste is developed early in life and young children begin to develop food preferences and eating habits at a young age. Providing young children with opportunities to enjoy foods in a pleasant environment influences their food habits throughout life.

Child care centers may provide snacks and meals for children or require that children bring lunch and snacks to school. In some programs the center may provide snacks and require that children bring a lunch. Either option is acceptable and can offer positive benefits to the children. The main goal of a child care nutrition program is providing children with opportunities throughout the day for snacks and meals. Since young children are still growing they may feel full at one moment and in a short time be hungry. A daily meal and snack schedule that provides breakfast, snack, lunch, snack, and a late afternoon snack offers the young child opportunities to eat throughout the day. Providing young children with nutritious foods requires that early childhood teachers are aware of the food requirements for young children.

## Healthy Foods

The Arizona Child Care Licensing Regulations provides the requirements for meal planning for young children. As an early childhood professional you should be aware of meal planning requirements; however, in most cases, the center administration and cook are responsible for meal planning and purchasing.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides nutrition guidelines for children and adults. You may be familiar with the Food Pyramid which is still available; however, in 2011 the public was introduced to My Plate which provides a visual image to use when thinking about developing a meal. My Plate emphasizes protein, dairy, grains, fruits, and vegetables in developing a meal plan. An easy to remember image, My Plate, can be used in creating nutrition activities for preschool and school-age children. When young children participate in nutrition activities they learn healthy eating habits, language, math, science, and social skills.



The Five Food Groups: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein and Dairy

Offering children healthy choices of foods from the five food groups is a good way to introduce different foods. As an early childhood professional, you are a role-model for the children in your program. Eating with the children is one way that you can influence the development of healthy eating behaviors. As a role model, eat what the children are eating, try different foods, be positive about the food, and encourage children to try foods but never force children to eat.

Child care centers are ideal for introducing foods from other cultures. The foods served in child care programs provide children with the nutritional essentials for their physical growth and can help children learn more about other families and cultures. Foods are a concrete and enjoyable way to introduce

children to the differences in families and cultures. Enrolled families can be wonderful resources of culturally diverse recipes that make all children feel comfortable with foods familiar to their family.

## **Food Allergies**

Food allergies have become more common in young children and they may have their first reaction at a childcare or school setting. Common food allergies include cow's milk, soy, egg, wheat, peanuts, and tree nuts. The majority of the common food allergies may be found in foods served in early childhood programs.

Food allergies occur when the immune system responds to a protein in a food as a dangerous invader and produces chemicals to protect the individual. It is important that you are aware of the cause and alert to the symptoms of food allergies. This knowledge will assist in preventing a child from suffering serious effects of an allergic reaction.

The chemicals produced can trigger an allergic reaction with symptoms that may include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Swelling of the tongue and throat
- Itching inside the mouth
- Vomiting
- Abdominal cramps
- Diarrhea
- Hives
- Eczema

Once children's food allergies have been identified it is critical that the child is restricted from the food(s) that cause the allergic reaction.

Child care programs are required to post the child's name and allergies, including food allergies, in each classroom. Additionally, a list of children with food allergies must be posted in the kitchen. It is essential that you are aware of this information so look for it when working in a classroom before you distribute any food.

As part of the Employee Orientation, you are required to learn the names of the children and specific medical conditions, including allergies, for the children in your care.

Talk to your Center Director about children with medical conditions, including food allergies. Be certain to follow specific directions for the care of children who require special diets, food substitutions, or medical treatments.

## Mealtime Routines

### Infant Feeding

Feeding young infants is one of the routines that create an opportunity to develop an attachment between the infant's caregiver and the infant. Each infant is held during feeding to enhance feelings of security and comfort that are important for emotional development. Frequently infants may be enrolled in programs while still breastfeeding. Often programs provide a location in the classroom for mothers to breastfeed their babies. Infants are always fed based on their individual schedule. An Infant Feeding Schedule is to be filled out and kept up to date as the child grows and their nutritional needs and feeding patterns change.

Parents may bring prepared bottles to the center or provide formula and bottles that may be prepared at the center. It is important that bottles containing breast milk or formula are labeled with the infant's name and the date the bottle was received or prepared. Remember breast milk is considered a bodily fluid and requires the caregiver to wear nonporous gloves when handling. Bottles need to be kept refrigerated until the baby is fed. For the safety of the children, heating bottles in the microwave is **not** allowed. Talk with your center director on how bottles are warmed.

Infants are introduced to cereal or solid foods at different times. Each infant's parent will communicate when the baby is to start eating cereal or solid foods and the order of foods to introduce to the infant. As infants are introduced to new foods watch for reactions that may indicate a food allergy. Be certain to talk with parents if you notice a reaction to a specific food. When a child begins to eat solid foods, a high chair is often used. For the safety of the children, it is essential that safety mechanisms such as belts are always used.

**\*\*Check with your Center Director on the policies and procedures for infant feeding, including the storage and use of breast milk.**

### Toddlers

By 12 months many infants are no longer taking a bottle and instead are eating prepared baby foods or in some cases have graduated to eating foods prepared by the parents or in the child care center kitchen. Young toddlers can begin to eat at the same time and typically enjoy the social interactions of eating with other children. Each child will develop the ability to use eating utensils at different times and most toddlers prefer their fingers to a spoon. Eating may become a sensory experience as the

children experiment with new foods that have different textures, smells, and tastes. Toddler meals and snacks require close teacher supervision and interaction. Communication, cognitive, and social skills are all developed during toddler eating times.

Supervision of toddlers is especially important since children under age 3 are at a high risk for choking. Choking may be caused by children putting large amounts of food in their mouth, attempting to talk and eat at the same time, or a delayed development of teeth. To reduce the risk of choking you can:

1. Give toddlers small amounts of food on their plate. Once they have finished you can give them more.
2. Observe the child to ensure they have chewed and swallowed all the food.
3. Cut foods into smaller pieces.
4. Foods to beware of giving toddlers include: raw peas or carrots, nuts, grapes, hot dogs, peanuts, chips, pretzel sticks, raisins, spoonfuls of peanut butter, raw broccoli or cauliflower, hard candy, and fruits with seeds that are not removed.
5. Toddlers are curious about everything including food. Be aware of children with allergies and ensure that the child has foods that are safe.

### **Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten Children**

By the time children are in preschool they are able to eat a wide variety of foods. At this age children are ready to actively participate in snack and meal routines. Family-style snack and meals are ideal for preschool and pre-kindergarten children. Children learn independence, cooperation, how to make decisions, and table manners. Arizona Child Care Licensing Regulations require that family-style meals are part of the mealtime routines in child care centers. The thought of family style meals with 3 year olds passing food can be intimidating. However, the licensing regulations state that not all elements of family style service need to be implemented. Passing food is only one part of family style meals. Meal time is an active learning time that offers children times to socialize and learn. DHS requires that lunch and dinner are family-style meals as demonstrated by at least **one** of the following:

- a. Food is served from a serving container on the table where enrolled children are seated.
- b. Enrolled children serve themselves, independently or with the help of a staff member, from a serving container on the table where enrolled children are seated.
- c. Enrolled children pass a serving container from individual to individual.
- d. In a facility where lunch or dinner is provided by the facility, a staff member sits at the table and eats the lunch or dinner with enrolled children.



- e. In a facility where each enrolled child brings the enrolled child's own lunch or dinner, a staff member sits at the table with the enrolled children and eats the staff member's own lunch or dinner.

Family-style meals have another benefit. Getting children involved in the mealtime preparations may influence picky eaters to try something new since they are participating. Activities that promote healthy eating using the USDA MyPlate guidelines might encourage children to try different foods. In the article *Getting Picky Eaters to Pick Less and Eat More* the author makes the following suggestions:

1. Avoid food fights and power struggles by not making an issue of child eating or trying everything on their plate.
2. Respect children's food preferences. Everyone has favorite foods and foods to avoid. Introduce foods to children and re-introduce them. Just as our food preferences change so do those of young children.
3. In planning each meal provide something that all children will eat. For example, most children will eat bread and butter.
4. During meal and snack times sit with the children and engage in conversation but do not talk about how much is being eaten.

Sanitation is one concern with serving family-style meals in a child care center. The article, *Pass the Peas, Not the Germs: Safe Family Style Meals* provides guidance on reducing the transmission of germs.

- Effective hand washing prior to children assisting in meal preparations or eating is one of most successful ways to reduce the spread of germs.
- Teachers who eat at the table with children provide effective supervision and reduce the incidence of children sharing food, utensils and plates.

### **School Age Children**

School age children require snacks and meals that promote growth, meet their nutrition needs, and provide them with the energy for activities. School age children can participate in meal and snack routines. Depending on the situation, school age children are at the age to help in planning afterschool snacks or field trip lunches. Providing school age children with the USDA information on healthy eating and a food budget is one way to encourage children to eat nutritious meals and snacks, provide learning experiences, and develop life skills.

## Applying Your Knowledge

Nutrition is part of the basic care and education program for young children. Young children who experience positive experiences with healthy foods and mealtimes are more likely to continue the same practices throughout their lives. Meals and snacks provide daily routines that promote independence, decision-making, social, and academic skills for young children. As an early childhood professional designing meal and snack time routines that promote participation can make your job easier and more rewarding. Be a role model for children by joining them for meals and snacks and eating healthy and nutritious foods.

## Check Your Understanding

- ✓ Observe the mealtime routine for the children in your classroom. What changes could you do to improve the mealtime routine?
- ✓ Explain your role in providing nutritional snacks and meals.
- ✓ Describe 2 ways you can promote healthy eating and nutrition in your classroom.
- ✓ Give 2 elements of family style meal service.

## Resources

### Printable Resource

DHS – Meal Patterns [http://www.azdhs.gov/als/childcare/documents/providers/forms/meal\\_patterns.pdf](http://www.azdhs.gov/als/childcare/documents/providers/forms/meal_patterns.pdf)

### Videos

DHS – Family Style Meal Video (Scroll down) <http://www.azdhs.gov/empowerpack/#childcare>

DHS – Infant Nutrition Video (Scroll down) <http://www.azdhs.gov/empowerpack/#childcare>

DHS – Breastfeeding Video (Scroll down) <http://www.azdhs.gov/empowerpack/#childcare>

### Additional Resource

USDA MyPlate <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

## References

Center for Managing Chronic Diseases, Food Allergies in Child Care Centers, Retrieved from <http://cmcd.sph.umich.edu/food-allergies-in-childcare-centers.html>

Pass the Peas and Not the Germs [http://www.healthychild.net/NutritionAction.php?article\\_id=510](http://www.healthychild.net/NutritionAction.php?article_id=510)

## Module 2-Section C Worksheet

**Observe the mealtime routine for the children in your classroom. What changes could you do to improve the mealtime routine?**

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**Explain your role in providing nutritional snacks and meals.**

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**Describe 2 ways you can promote healthy eating and nutrition in your classroom.**

1.

2.

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**Name 2 elements of Family-Style Meal Service.**

1.

2.

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