



DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND SUPPORT SERVICES  
CITY OF CHICAGO

To: Head Start and Early Head Start programs

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Subject: Nutrition Practice Guidelines for Head Start

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The following document has been developed to **supplement** the existing Food Service Requirements document. For the sake of effectively communicating appropriate information to Head Start Sites, nutrition information for sites has been expanded into an additional document. Meaning, information not directly related to the food service component has been removed from the previous versions of the Food Service Requirements and combined with other pertinent information into a new document, which will be referred to as the Nutrition Practice Guidelines for Head Start.

The purpose of this document is to provide simple reference for information that Head Start and Early Head Starts sites to utilize to meet the needs of the children and families enrolled in their programs. This information is intended to clarify established practices already in place.

This document is intended to cover the following topics:

- Family style dining
- Physical activity guidelines
- Nutrition education guidelines
- Required posted documentation
- Choking information
- Infant feeding guidelines
- Socialization nutrition guidelines
- Allergy documentation and guidelines
- Tooth brushing guidelines
- Nutritionist credentials

## Family Style Dining Service: an overview

All toddlers, preschool children and assigned classroom staff (including volunteers) eat together family style and share the same menu to the extent possible in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. *Head Start Performance Standards 134.23, c, 4* For additional information on family style dining, please review the March, 2015 Health Services Newsletter at National Center on Health in Head Start, Volume 3, Issue 3 for in depth discussion on family meal service. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/docs/health-services-newsletter-201503.pdf>

### Preparation

Children and adults (teachers, aides and parents) should wash their hands prior to every meal. All adults involved in meal time will wash their hands. Hands must be washed in addition to wearing gloves. Hand sanitizer is not an acceptable alternative to washing hands with soap and water. (Except in cases where no running water is available or if children are on a field trip.)

Child sized tables and chairs will be used. Children's feet should rest on the floor.

Tables will be cleaned with soap and sanitized (with bleach solution or other approved sanitizer.)

Head Start Performance Standards: 1304.22 e,1,ii; 1304.23 e,1;

City of Chicago Health Requirements for Child Care Centers pg14, X, J, 2; pg25, IV, K; pg27, IV, D; pg36, I, A, 8;

### Serving and Dishware

All foods served should be placed in serving bowls or platters. Children are to pass foods and serve themselves. Food should not be pre-plated.

Serving bowls and platters should be easy for children to hold. They should not be plastic storage containers or mixing bowls. Serving bowls should remain on the table the duration of the meal. There should be enough serving bowls to place at every table where children are eating. Bowls should not be passed table to table.

Utensils should be appropriately sized for children. Cooking and serving utensils used in the kitchen / for adults are not appropriate.

Children should be served on plates. They may be plain or sectional. They may be made of any material (ceramic, plastic, paper or Styrofoam\*.) Fruit or dessert at lunch must be served in a separate dish and not on plates containing hot food unless sectional dishware is used and is separate from other food.

\*Toddlers under the age of two are not to use Styrofoam due to choking risk.

City of Chicago Health Requirements for Child Care Centers pg25 IV, [J, K and I]

State of Illinois Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers 407.370 e, 6

### Mealtime

Children may choose what foods they want to eat. Adults should encourage children to eat foods, but not force them. Family style meal service aims to allow children the freedom to make choices and develop healthy mealtime behaviors.

All adults in the classroom (teacher, teacher aide, parent) should share meals with children. Adults should model healthy eating and mealtime behaviors to children. Adults should engage in pleasant discussion with children. During meal times, children should be given the time to eat their food and enjoy pleasant discussion. It is not a time for a nutrition education lesson. Adults should not punish or reward children with food. Adults should share in the same meal as the children. Adult's personal foods should not be eaten at the table or in front of children.

Head Start Performance Standards: 1304.23 c, 4; 1304.23 c, 2

City of Chicago Health Requirements for Child Care Centers pg25 IV, [D, G and H]

## Physical Activity Guidelines

### Head Start Performance Standards:

Active play and movement: In center-based settings, grantee and delegate agencies must promote each child's physical development by providing sufficient time, indoor and outdoor space, equipment, materials and adult guidance for active play and movement that support the development of gross motor skills.  
1304.21(a)(5)(i)

### The 2011 Joint Resolution of the City of Chicago Dept. of Public Health and The Chicago Board of Health:

Centers should provide "a program of age and developmentally appropriate physical activity." Children should not be sedentary for over 60 minutes at a time, except during scheduled rest or nap time.

Children ages 12 months and older who are in child care for at least six hours a day should engage in at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity. For children ages zero to three, physical activity sessions should be broken up into 15 minute increments.

Children in a part-day program should engage in a proportional amount of activity. All children should be able to play outdoors. During poor weather, active indoor play should be encouraged.

Structured and guided activities should be led by caregivers and promote basic movement, creative movement, motor skills development, and general coordination. Physical activity should be documented and included in the daily schedule. The documentation should be made available to the department of Public Health upon request.

### I am Moving I am Learning (IMIL)

IMIL integrates movement and nutrition experiences into daily routines and across multiple learning domains. The overarching goals of I Am Moving, I Am Learning are to: Increase the quantity of time spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity(MVPA) during the daily routine to meet national guidelines for physical activity; Improve the quality of structured movement experiences intentionally facilitated by teachers and adults; Improve healthy nutrition choices for children every day. IMIL is also one of the DFSS milestones and should be integrated into the Head Start program.

It is strongly encouraged that in addition to integrating and including IMIL into the Head Start program, it be documented in the lesson plan.

## Nutrition Education

### Staff

Nutrition education should be provided to **all staff**, including administrative personnel.

A minimum of 8 hours per year shall be set aside for program(s) to incorporate information on foods and nutrition, and their application to child development and family health including update and revision, according to staff needs.

City of Chicago: Health Requirements for Child Care Centers: pg 29 I, B  
(Previously Chicago Licensing Standards: Appendix 1 1.16 I, B)

### Parents

Parents should be informed of the scope of nutrition learning activities provided in the program. Nutrition information/education programs should be conducted at least twice a year based on a needs assessment for nutrition information/education as perceived by families and staff.

City of Chicago: Health Requirements for Child Care Centers: pg 29 I, C  
(Previously Chicago Licensing Standards: Appendix 1 1.16 I, C)

Parent involvement in health, nutrition, and mental health education: Grantee and delegate agencies must provide medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health education programs for program staff, parents, and families.

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.40 f, 1

### Children

Nutrition education should be included at least once per week in the lesson plan.

Food experience activities should be included at least twice per month in the lesson plan.

Head Start Performance Standard 1304.23 c, 7  
Department of Family Support Services

## Posted Documentation for Food Service and Nutrition

### Name of document

### Requirements for posting, where to locate

Justice for All Poster:	Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964. To be posted in a visible location. Available from the United States Department of Agriculture: Food and Nutrition Service
Choke Saving Methods Poster:	Illinois Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers. To be posted in a visible location. Available from the Illinois Department of Public Health.
Current City of Chicago Inspection Report:	Illinois Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers. To be posted in a visible location. Refer to your site director or kitchen manager.
Food Allergies List and Cover Sheet:	Department of Family Support Services. To be posted in each classroom. Available on COPA.
Approved / signed menus:	Head Start Performance Standards. To be posted in a visible location for parents. Refer to your site director/dietitian or caterer.

## Choking

Risks of choking are high among young children-. Children's throats are small and developing. Children are still learning how to skillfully chew and eat their food. To decrease the risks of choking it is recommended to follow these guidelines:

### Infants and toddlers

Infants are recommended to wait until 4-6 months to begin eating solid foods in part to reduce risk of choking. The throat is still developing and infants can easily choke with underdeveloped throats and airways.

Infants should always be held when feeding. Infants should never be placed in a crib or carrier with a bottle unattended. "Propping" up a bottle with a pillow could lead to choking.

Toddlers should always be supervised by an adult when eating food and drinking from a bottle.

Food served to toddlers should be served in appropriate texture (pureed, mashed, chopped) based on the development of the child. Please see the foodservice requirements for more information.

### Young children

According to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, the size of a three year old's throat is approximately the size of a nickel.

It is recommended by the USDA that foods served to children under the age of 4 should:

- Be cooked until soft, shredded, mashed ground and thinly sliced.
- Cut into bite sized pieces that are a 1/2 inch or smaller.

Mealtimes should always be supervised by an adult. Adults should be participating in mealtimes during family style dining.

Children should not be given foods during times of play or running around. Children should be eating at meal times, seated at the dining table.

### DFSS policies

The DFSS Head Start program has developed a list of foods that it is recommended not be served to children due to choking risk. These food items should not be indicated on the menu and should not be served to children:

- Hotdogs, whole or rounds. *(may be served if sliced in half into short strips and be indicated on menu.)*
- Raw peas or beans
- Grapes, whole *(may be served if sliced in half. This must be indicated on the menu.)*
- Nuts and peanuts
- Popcorn
- Hard pretzels
- Carrots, raw whole or chunks. *(may be served if cooked or shredded and must be indicated on menu.)*
- Spoonful of peanut butter *(may be served if spread thinly onto foods.)*

DFSS has instituted a policy that all fruits should be served appropriately for children to consume without difficulty. Hard and difficult to eat fruits should be sliced for children to that they are easier to consume.

USDA: Team Nutrition Supplement A - Practice Choking Prevention. June, 2013

Academy of Pediatrics: Policy Statement - Prevention of Choking Among Children. March, 2010

City of Chicago Department of Family Support Services: Food Service Requirements Policy. June, 2015

## **Infant Feeding Guidelines**

1. Please be sure to check the Food Service Requirements for information on foods that may be served to infants and on how to safely prepare the food.
2. Infants are to be fed on demand. Staff should be trained to observe and identify feeding cues and respond appropriately.
3. Infants are to be held while feeding. Infants and toddlers should always be supervised when feeding.
4. Feeding times and amounts consumed shall be documented in writing and available for review by the parents. (A sample of the Early Head Start daily care sheet is available on the DFSS Head Start website, located within Providers section under Health.)
5. Staff should frequently communicate with parents on children's eating habits including such information as solid foods tried and tolerated by infants, allergies and reactions.
6. Infants under the age of one year should follow the CACFP infant meal pattern. A copy of this document is provided in the Food Service Requirements document. Children should not be served solid foods prior to 4-6 months as recommended by American Academy of Pediatrics.
7. The infant Formula Waiver / Food Waiver Notification document must be completed and filed for each infant in the program. This document is located on the ISBE website.

Head Start performance Standards

Illinois Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers part 407

## **Early Head Start Socialization Nutrition Guidelines**

1. Early Head Start Home Based programs should provide at minimum 2 group socializations for every child per month.
2. Programs should provide appropriate snacks and meals during socializations to children.
3. Menus with foods served during socialization should be approved by a dietitian, nutritionist or master of public health. Menus / foods should be approved prior to when food is served. Foods should be appropriate for children based on their developmental needs.
4. Home visitors and parents include nutrition education into the socialization activities.

Head Start Performance Standards

## Allergy Documentation and Guidelines: an overview

Please review the Department of Family Support Services (DFSS) website (COPA) for full policies regarding food allergies in Head Start and Early Head Start.

### Child's Medical Documentation

Sites should ensure documentation has been submitted by parents at the time of enrollment in regards to children with food allergies. Please review the Allergy Policy on the DFSS website.\*

All medications / treatments are on site before the child attends the first day of day care.

Medically-based diets or other dietary requirements will be accommodated. *Head Start Performance Standard 1304.23 c, 6* Substitutions must be made for any child with disabilities (i.e. a life-threatening reaction when exposed to the food and/or beverage.) A statement must be provided by the child's physician which should include: explanation of disability, foods to be omitted and foods to be substituted.

Please refer to the Illinois State Board of Education website on Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs for more information. [www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/special\\_dietary.htm](http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/special_dietary.htm)

### Posted Documentation

Menus should be posted in a location visible to parents so that they may review foods being served in the event special accommodations need to be made.

In each classroom, a current list of children with food allergies should be posted. Children's' names, food allergies and substitutions should be posted. The Food Allergies Cover Sheet should be adhered on top of the list to protect the privacy of the children.\*

A list of all children with allergies should be provided and posted in the kitchen.

### Policies

Home prepared food shall not be permitted in the center except in the case of special food needs [medically prescribed diets, diet for religious reasons, food allergies] that cannot be met by the center. These foods will be labeled with the child's name and date. The food will be stored appropriately until served, and served only to that child.

There shall be no foods brought to the Head Start site by parents to be given to any children, other than their own. This includes (but is not limited to) birthday parties, holiday parties and celebrations. All food items, including "healthy snacks" and prepackaged food such as candies, beverages and snacks may never be brought into the site.

*City of Chicago Health Requirements for Child Care Centers: page 24 parts II and III*

\*These documents can be found on the Department of Family Support Services website under the Health Section for Providers.

## Toothbrushing and Dental Health

Based upon the 2015 Department of Family Support Services: Program Daily Tooth-brushing Policy, 0-5

The following bullet points are summarized directly from the newest DFSS Head Start and Early Head Start tooth-brushing policy. Please refer to that document for the full sets of guidelines and requirements.

Half day programs will brush teeth once per day.

Full day programs will brush two times per day.

Once a day flossing will be initiated at approximately 2.5-3 years of age, when the back molars move together.

Early Head Start programs should implement a daily tooth-brushing program.

Infants should have their gums wiped by a staff or parents with a one-time use gauze or a sponge-toothbrush.

Every child should have their own labeled toothbrush.

Toothbrushes should be replaced every 3-4 months.

Toothbrushes should be stored separately from one another in a hygienic holder. Toothbrushes should not touch or drip on one another.

Air should be able to circulate.

The bristles should not touch anything.

Toothpaste should be placed on a cup or wax paper for children to scoop onto their toothbrushes.

## Nutritionist Credentials

Nutrition services in Head Start and Early Head Start programs must be supported by at least one of the following: (per Head Start Performance Standards, 1304.52, d, 3)

Registered Dietitians

Licensed Nutritionists

Master's Degree in Public Health Nutritionist

Member of the Academy of Nutritionists and Dietetics who is eligible to take the exam

A short list of the services the nutritionist shall provide to the site:

(Please see the **cooperative agreement** for the full list of services)

- Menu approval
- Nutrition education for parents and staff
- Nutrition assessments of children
- Consultation for parents regarding nutritional concerns