

PROCEDURES FOR EHS MEAL SERVICE

It is the philosophy of Shasta Head Start that children have an opportunity to eat a wide variety of foods in an environment which teaches an understanding of the foods they are eating, hand washing skills, appropriate mealtime behaviors, and enhances eating skills.

Below are procedures to follow during meal service:

1. Before each meal a quiet time or transition activity is planned. This quiet time allows children to make a calm transition more effectively from play to mealtime. This quiet time may be used to discuss what foods will be eaten at mealtime or snack, and to begin the process of hand washing.
2. Older toddlers can be selected to help set the table. These children may be called the "helping hands" for the day. They need to wash their hands before setting the tables and assisted in how to appropriately handle plates and cups. Staff should handle the utensils.
3. The food, plates, and utensils are available at the table before the children sit down to eat. All food is covered with plastic wrap. Safe dinner knives should be available to children who have the developmental skill to use them for cutting and spreading food. Children should never be required to wait for food at any time.
4. The Primary Caregiver is responsible for deciding upon a suitable placement of the children at the table. Consideration will be given to children who may need additional help. Ideally children who need extra help will be placed next to an adult, and the food will be passed in a direction that allows the adult to be able to best assist the child.
5. The children wash their hands prior to sitting down at the table. For infants, the Primary Caregiver should help the baby wash their hands prior to every feeding.
6. The Primary Caregiver is responsible to ensure that substitute food is available at the table from the cook for children with food allergies, food intolerances, special dietary needs, and cultural/religious prohibitions.
7. The staff begin the meal process by talking about the foods, modeling correct serving sizes while serving themselves, and encouraging and assisting the toddlers in passing the food and serving themselves to assist in building skills. The staff remove the plastic wrap from the food, names the food, and discusses how much of the food should be placed on the plate initially. Staff need to know the correct childcare food program serving size to model an appropriate first serving. Cooks can assist staff with proper serving sizes.
8. Staff model good eating behaviors including using "please" and "thank you", discussing ways to slow down the eating process by chewing each bite thoroughly prior to taking the next bite, and engaging in conversation during mealtime.
9. Children are encouraged to try all foods, but do not need to have all foods on their plates.
10. Children should be encouraged to clear their own place at the table when they are done, whenever possible. They are responsible for scraping their own dishes and cleaning up their own spills.
11. Before children are released from the eating table the Primary Caregiver should wait until most of the children are done eating. When the children are released, they need to be released to a staff member who will be available to supervise them.