

INDEPENDENCE ASSOCIATION HCBS Policy: 013**Title: Meals and Food Management****Date: April 28, 2022****Policy:**

Independence Association (IA) will ensure all individuals served in all programs and settings will have *uninhibited access to food and liquids at any time and will uphold dining practices that ensures participant dignity and engagement in age-appropriate interactions for meals both inside and outside the setting. All staff will be trained at the time of hire on this policy. Re-training will promptly occur, as needed, to ensure policy and procedures are followed correctly and consistently.

Procedures:**I. Group Homes and Shared Living Arrangements:**

1. DSPs and contractors working with individuals who require assistance with feeding will be taught how to identify each individual's, desired pace, and preferences regarding sequence of food items and temperature of food items, method for indicating desire to refuse particular food items; method (e.g. clock face locations) for people with visual impairments to indicate choices and sequence of food items desired.
2. Staff and contractors will be trained to:
 - a. respect individual(s) preferences to eat with others or eat alone.
 - b. provide adaptive equipment/tools to individuals as necessary to support independence.
 - c. provide guidance and prompts quietly to protect privacy and dignity of each individual.
 - d. decorate and furnishing the dining area to ensure use of age-appropriate décor, dinnerware, and dining area layout that encourages adult interactions.
 - e. offer choices of food with consideration for individuals' health, allergies, and ethnic or religious needs.
 - f. adjust food preparation and cooking schedules to accommodate individuals' preferences for when they want to eat.
 - g. provide flexibility, at each meal, with regard to the dining room furniture layouts (arrangements) so individuals can choose to sit alone, with one other person, or with a larger number of people.
 - h. allow individuals to eat in their bedrooms.
3. When individuals choose to eat in their rooms:

- a. all perishable food must be put back in the refrigerator, either in its original container or in a storage container.
 - b. Food that needs to be thrown away, must be placed in a covered, trash/garbage can in the kitchen.
 - c. Non-perishable foods that need no refrigeration after being opened, may be kept in the individual's room as long as the items are securely closed/sealed.
4. Programs will strive to:
- a. Establish opportunities for individuals to go grocery shopping at least two times/week.
 - b. Offer opportunities to do grocery shopping at different stores depending on the preferences, interests and needs of individual(s) residing in the setting.
 - c. Ensure individuals can request to go grocery shopping when they wish to, even if outside the scheduled times that are offered at least 2 times/week.
 - d. Use grocery shopping trips as opportunities for individuals to learn and become more independent in using the variety of skills involved in grocery shopping (e.g. list making, reading labels and signs, money skills, comparing prices, using coupons, packing bags, and soft skills used with other customers and grocery store staff).
 - e. Ensure the provision of regular opportunities and support for individuals to engage in meal planning on both an individualized and/or group basis, allowing people to choose their preference or choose to both plan/decide some meals together with others living in the setting and plan/decide other meals on an individual basis .
 - f. If any meal(s) are planned by staff, at minimum each individual should be able to give input to staff regarding their preferences for what the meal will be and when it will be served.
5. Unless there are individual restrictions based on documented modifications for health or safety reasons individuals will have uninhibited access to food and drinks stored for them within the setting.
6. Any restrictions will be documented in person-centered plans.
7. Residential settings will ensure:
- a. The kitchen and dining areas are not locked or otherwise closed off at any time during the day or night.
 - b. Cabinets containing food and the refrigerator(s) and food freezer(s) are not locked.
 - c. There are no provider-established rules limiting where a person may eat (e.g. in living room; family room; own bedroom).
 - d. An individual does not have to ask or receive staff permission to eat or drink something.
 - e. Ensure individuals have the option to request an alternate meal, if meals are planned in advance.
 - f. Ensure individuals can identify when they may wish to have an alternate meal.
 - g. Identify the types of alternate meals residents would like to have available so this can be addressed when grocery shopping is done.

- h. The setting offers meal choices for individuals that account for diet restrictions/goals, allergies, and ethnic or religious requirements.
- i. Allow individuals to choose where to eat in the setting (or on the setting's grounds if weather appropriate) and receive any needed assistance with dining in the chosen location.
- j. When staffing is limited or does not allow for simultaneous assistance to individuals the setting will stagger eating times to permit individuals to choose private dining if desired.
- k. When residents desire to eat at the same time but privately, settings will devise creative ways to allow private dining.

II. Community Supports Programs and Community Settings

1. Community supports programs normally do not prepare meals for individuals or have menus. Individuals bring their own lunch, or purchase lunch from local vendors. This also applies to situations where participants eat in the community.
2. Community supports programs will be trained to comply with I-2, a-d above.
3. Community support programs will:
 - a. Ensure individual participants can talk with and spend time with anyone that is at the setting (assuming there is mutual interest in spending time together).
 - b. Ensure all participants may sit with whomever they choose (or sit by themselves, if preferred).
 - c. Prohibit limiting the amount of time a participant may choose to sit with or spend time with other participant(s) in the setting if there is mutual interest in spending time together.
 - d. Ensure if setting is divided into separate areas (e.g. classrooms) that individuals are not put into strictly defined groups assigned to certain classrooms, without the ability to change this in order to be with people who are not in the same classroom.
 - e. Prohibit the separation of individual participants from one another in the setting unless requested by one or more participants or restriction is documented in the Person-Centered Plans.
 - f. Train all staff on policy and practices/protocols to support policy; provide refresher training as needed.

**Uninhibited access is defined as access to snacks, liquids, and other items that do not necessarily require staff to prepare and cook the food. Scheduled mealtimes and exceptions for those with work or other offsite activities will be supported by staff preparation and cooking of the meal. Staff and or contractors will not be required to prepare and or cook meals 24-hours per day.*