

## Purpose:

The My Meals My Way Policy Guideline helps staff make sure that mealtimes are safe and enjoyable for everyone using Life Without Barriers (LWB) Disability and Mental Health (DMH) services. This means we support people who have trouble swallowing and dysphagia and help identify those who might be at risk of it.

.This policy guideline aligns with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDISQ) [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#) and the NDISQ Practice Alerts on [Dysphagia, safe swallowing and mealtime management](#), and [Medicines associated with swallowing problems](#).

Our practice reflects the policy when delivering NDIS support to children and young people within LWB Children Youth and Families foster care, residential care and aftercare services, and adults in Disability and Mental Health Services.

## Who should read this document?

All staff working with people receiving support under the NDIS, the people we support, their decision-makers and/or support network members should be aware of this policy.

## Principles:

- Respect each person's right and ability to make choices and decisions.
- To keep people with disabilities safe, LWB will support our staff in how to help if someone is choking or having trouble swallowing. We will also make sure that we have the right processes in place to report and review any accidents. LWB will also help the people we support get the medical assistance and resources they need.
- We will involve the people we support in everything related to their meals. We will ask what's important to and for them and what they like and don't like. This means we will include their traditions and culture in the food they eat, create a comfortable place for them to eat, and help them have a healthy relationship with food.
- We will make sure to give people the information in a way that they understand best. This will help them know how we will support them with any problems they have when swallowing, how we will check to see what's wrong, and how we will support them with their meals.
- People should be able to make their own choices and decide how to handle risks and get help. Staff will assist people in making good decisions by giving them support to find the information they need about [independence, informed choice, and capacity](#).
- Staff will assist and support people to make safe, happy, and enjoyable places to eat and mealtimes that feel calm and agreeable to them.
- All individuals with diagnosed swallowing issues/dysphagia will have a current Mealtime Management Plan providing advice on modifying food texture, fluid consistency, special dietary therapy, positioning, and safe eating techniques developed by an Appropriately Qualified Health Professional (AQHP) of their choice.
- When a choking event occurs this will be referred to the CPE and a member will work with the operational team to look into the incident and find ways to make things better and safer.

- All requirements under the relevant legislation or standards (e.g., NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators) are included into our practice when supporting people in identifying and managing dysphagia and swallowing problems.
- LWB will support all DMH services staff to recognise and address problems with swallowing, eating, and drinking, how to respond to choking, understand how to refer people for help, and work together to make sure meals are safe, enjoyable, and nutritious.
- All staff who support people who need help with their meals must get training to learn how to support them properly. This includes
  - Understanding a person's Mealtime Management Plan.
  - Prepare and serve food and drinks safely according to their plan and needs.
  - Food texture and drink thickness.
- All the food we make, store, and serve will follow the rules from Food Standards Australia and New Zealand. This includes the ingredients we use, the way we prepare meals, and the tools and equipment we use.

### **Identifying people at risk of swallowing (dysphagia) and nutritional difficulties:**

People with disability experience higher rates of swallowing difficulties and dysphagia than the general population. People with disability who have dysphagia are also more likely to die from choking, respiratory illnesses, or serious health complications due to failure to identify people at risk or poor management of their dysphagia.

Many people with disabilities have trouble swallowing, and this can be more serious for them than for other people. People with disabilities who have trouble swallowing are more likely to die from choking, breathing problems, or other serious health issues because their swallowing problems aren't recognised or treated well.

- People we support are encouraged to undertake an annual assessment using the [NDIS LWB 5521 Nutrition and Swallowing Risk - Checklist](#) to help identify any risks.
- During the intake process, people answer questions to find out if they already have a mealtime plan and to understand what kind of mealtime support they need. After that, our local teams will look at the type of support needed more closely and check for swallowing issues.
- Mealtime Management Plans must be reviewed at least every 12 months or earlier if indicated in the Plan or if any changes occur.

People with a diagnosis of severe dysphagia will be supported as outlined in the [NDIS LWB 5685 HIDPA Severe Dysphagia Management- Procedure.docx](#)

Related Documents:

This Policy Guideline must be read together with the following documents:

[NDIS LWB 5517 My Meals My Way - Procedure](#)

[NDIS LWB 5523 Mealtime Support- Procedure](#)

[NDIS LWB 5685 HIDPA Severe Dysphagia Management- Procedure](#)

[NDIS LWB 5520 Nutrition and Swallowing Risk Checklist – Procedure](#)

[NDIS LWB 5501 Health and Wellbeing- Procedure](#)

[NDIS LWB 5001a Client Profile – Procedure](#)

[Medication Administration Procedures](#)

[NDIS LWB 931 Independence and Informed Choice – Procedure](#)

[International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative](#)

[Food Standards Australia and New Zealand – Food Safety Hub](#)