

ACTIVE SUPERVISION

Mealtime Supervision

“Staff shall be attentive and participating with all children during mealtimes and shall be seated within an arm’s length away from children thirty-six (36) months of age and younger.”

SIT AND EAT WITH CHILDREN.



When teachers sit and eat with children, they are able to be attentive and participate with children during meals and snacks. This increases safety, provides time for building relationships through social interactions with children, and allows teachers to model enjoying nutritious foods.

To enable teachers to sit and eat with children and to stay within arm’s reach of children 36 months and younger who are eating/drinking, supports need to be provided, such as comfortable adult seating at the table and additional staffing for larger groups.

STAY WITHIN ARMS REACH OF CHILDREN.



MAKE IT SOCIAL.



Making meals and snacks social increases enjoyment and supervision of children during the meal. It is easier to actively supervise when teachers are directly engaged and participating with children, having conversations and talking with them about topics that interest them as they eat. These interactions are also natural learning and relationship building opportunities as children use their social and language skills.

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Mealtime Supervision Tips for Success

- Focus only on mealtime supervision during meals and snacks and refrain from unrelated classroom duties and tasks, such as putting out mats, cleaning up, etc.
- Hold infants and young toddlers while they are drinking their bottles.
- For children eating table food, place all food and drinks on the table prior to calling the children to the table.
- Provide space at each table and an adult chair for a teacher to sit at the table, eat with the children, and have social conversations with the children.
- Consider serving food already plated or utilizing family style dining. These methods allow children to sit and eat, while everyone is seated at the table, reducing the need to leave the table during the meal.
- Second helpings need to be within reach or on the table to prevent leaving the table when children request them.
- A teacher must stay within arm's reach of children 36 months and younger who are eating. Consider scheduling meals/snacks for children on individualized schedules or in small groups, rather than all at once, to make this easier to accomplish.
- In centers, if there is more than one teacher in the classroom and the group size allows one teacher to remain within arm's reach of all children during meals/snacks, divide duties so one teacher is always with children who are eating and drinking and one teacher is supervising children who are transitioning away from the tables, such as when they are handwashing or playing.
- If multiple tables are needed for larger group sizes, multiple teachers will need to be seated so that all children at all tables are within arm's reach when eating and drinking.
- In center classrooms with only one teacher, work with the Director to get mealtime support to ensure supervision requirements can be met.
 - Floaters or the cook can place all food and drinks on the table prior to the teacher and children coming over.
 - Floaters can help supervise children who are not eating.
 - Schedule mealtimes to occur at staggered times, rather than all at the same time, to increase options for floater support.