

Purpose

The NDIS LWB 5523 Mealtime Support - Procedure will help LWB to achieve our goal of partnering with people and changing lives for the better. It is designed to allow staff to support a person's dignity, choices, and involvement in mealtime activities and assist people in ensuring a positive and enjoyable mealtime environment and quality mealtime support.

The NDIS LWB 5523 Mealtime Support - Procedure is to be applied in association with the [NDIS LWB 5516 My Meals My Way - Policy Guideline](#), [NDIS LWB 5517 My Meals My Way - Procedure](#) and the [NDIS LWB 5685 HIDPA Severe Dysphagia Management - Procedure](#).

What is Mealtime Support?

Mealtime Support brings all parts of LWB's My Meals My Way approach to the table. It links independence, social connections, and identity together to create the opportunity for everyone to engage in a safe and enjoyable mealtime experience.

Our approach to safe and enjoyable mealtimes

Safety is important, and so is the quality of someone's life. Our role is to support not only safe but enjoyable mealtimes.

Helping a person express their unique likes and dislikes, traditions and customs, attitude toward mealtime and any mealtime support required is very important.

All LWB staff who support people with mealtimes will use a person-centred approach to:

- Keep the person safe and well, and reduce any risks.
- Respect the person's choices about food and how they want their mealtimes to be.
- Support the person's identity and culture, because who they are affects how they experience mealtimes.
- Learn about the person and how they like to connect with others during meals.
- Involve the person in meal-related tasks, whether familiar or new, so they are engaged and feel included and valued.
- Make the dining area warm, relaxed, and friendly to help the person enjoy mealtimes more.
- Celebrate special occasions like birthdays or cultural holidays during mealtimes.

Working Together

Safe and enjoyable mealtimes are best supported by working together. Therefore, all Disability Support Leaders (DSL)¹ and Disability Support Workers (DSW) will work with the person, their family/friends, other service providers, and health professionals to ensure safe and positive mealtime activities and find solutions to any mealtime support challenges.

Who should have a Mealtime Management Plan?

Any person:

- having difficulty safely eating or drinking,
- diagnosed with Dysphagia (swallowing difficulties),
- diagnosed with other health conditions that impact mealtimes,
- unable to obtain the required levels of nutrition as per the Australian Dietary Guidelines,
- requiring modifications to eat or drink, including
 - specialised/modified equipment and positioning,
 - a specialised diet,
 - texture-modified food and fluids,
- who needs any support to assist them in eating and drinking safely or nutritiously.

Any person we support who requires Enteral Nutrition must have a current [NDIS LWB 5623 Enteral Feeding Support - Plan](#). In addition, if the person can have some oral food and fluid intake, they will also require a Mealtime Management Plan detailing instructions on how the DSW can safely support oral intake.

Following the [NDIS LWB 5520 Nutrition and Swallowing Risk Checklist - Procedure](#) may identify these risk factors.

Mealtime Management Plan Development

The Appropriately Qualified Health Professional (AQHP) who has assessed the person will document the person's mealtime support requirements within a Mealtime Management Plan. Staff can give AQHP a copy of the [NDIS LWB 5519 Mealtime Management Plan Essentials -Checklist](#) to help them understand what needs to be included in the plan.

The NDIS funds a range of disability-related health supports (including Dysphagia) through plan budgets. Funded supports include:

- the development and review of a Mealtime Management Plan by an AQHP or clinician, for example, a Speech Pathologist.

¹ All references to a DSL includes other Frontline Leadership roles, such as House Supervisors.

- training for the DSW by a health practitioner or clinician in understanding the person's mealtime support requirements.
- consumables such as thickeners that enable a person to swallow more easily and reduce their risk of aspiration and choking.
- equipment to safely prepare modified textures such as blenders or food processors.
- food moulds to make food more visually appealing and stimulate enjoyable meals, thereby reducing the risk of malnutrition or dehydration.
- modified cutlery and cups to support safe oral intake and independence.

If a person requires mealtime support and does not have the necessary support funding for these items the DSL will work with the person, their decision-making support network, and Support Coordinator to assist with an NDIS Plan Variation or Reassessment.

The Disability Support Leader will:

- Work with the person and the people who support their decision-making or their authorised decision-maker to get their consent. Help them find and choose an Allied Health Professional (AQHP), and share any relevant information with their Support Coordinator.
- Make sure the person is supported to participate in the Mealtime Management Plan development and understands the plan.
- Provide an opportunity for the person to complete the [NDIS LWB 5526 My Meals My Way - Profile](#). This profile can be shared with the AQHP, who is creating a Mealtime Management Plan. It helps make sure the person's likes, dislikes and any mealtime needs are included in the plan.
- Work with all AQHPs involved in developing a Mealtime Management Plan, for example, Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Dietitians, and Dentists, so that information is in one single resource where possible.
- Support the person to express their choice and provide a copy of the plan or information in a communication style suited to them.
- Work with the AQHP to ensure an understanding of the resource and rostering requirements needed for Mealtime Support requirements.
- Work with the AQHP to obtain documented evidence for specific funded supports, that will support an NDIS Plan development or review process as required

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- Record any discussions with the person about choice, control and consent as a Progress Note on their CIRTS file. Include a description of the person's facial expressions, body language, words and vocalisations regarding choice and consent.
- Escalate to the Regional Operations Manager (ROM) any issues related to working with AQHPs around the required essentials included in the plan.

Mealtime Management Plan Training:

All DSWs will be orientated to mealtime support needs as per the person's needs and their Mealtime Management Plan, as outlined in [NDIS LWB 5517 My Meals My Way - Procedure](#).

The [NDIS LWB 5450 Support Plan – Staff Declaration](#) must be signed after the orientation has been completed.

Orientation should occur with the person present wherever possible and at a suitable time.

When supporting people with a Severe Dysphagia or Enteral feeding (Tube feeding) plan, the DSL will follow [NDIS LWB 5600 High-Intensity Daily Personal Support – Procedure](#) and the [NDIS LWB 5685 HIDPA Severe Dysphagia Management - Procedure](#).

Providing Mealtime Support

All people who need a Mealtime Management Plan should be given information about their plan in a way that suits how they communicate. This helps them understand how support workers will help them during meals to keep them safe.

When providing mealtime support to a person, the Disability Support Worker will:

- Follow the 7 Rights of Mealtime Support.
 1. Right Person and Plan
 2. Right support and response
 3. Right type of nutrition and hydration
 4. Right texture and consistency
 5. Right position
 6. Right aids and equipment
 7. Right documentation and record-keeping

If one of the 7 Rights is incorrect, you will need to record a Nutrition and Swallowing event in iReport.

All Disability Support Workers will:

- Be oriented or trained by AQHP (for HIDPA Severe Dysphagia) in the specific mealtime support requirements for all persons they provide mealtime support for.
- Fill out the '[NDIS LWB 5450 Support Plan - Staff Declaration](#)'. This form is used to confirm that they have received training on how to support the person according to their plan.
- Make sure they have access to all the plans that support the person's mealtime and dietary needs. This might include items such as a Diabetes Management Plan, an Anaphylaxis Action Plan, and an EpiPen, if they have food-related allergies.
- Make sure any equipment or aids the person needs for eating or drinking are set up and ready before their meal or drink is served.

- Always follow the person's mealtime and dietary plans exactly as written. These plans are designed to keep the person safe, especially if they have swallowing difficulties or other health needs. Even if the person asks for something different, don't change the plan, as doing so could increase the risk of choking or other harm.
- Make sure the person's My Meals My Way - Profile is used to create positive and enjoyable mealtimes.
- Make sure food is stored and handled safely to avoid contamination. Also, check that meals are prepared with the correct texture and consistency, and that each meal is given to the right person.
- Support the person to be as independent as possible during mealtimes. Pay attention to when they need help and when they can do things on their own, and adjust your support to match. This helps build their confidence and respect their abilities and choices.
- Before the meal, talk with the person about how you'll be helping them, based on their Mealtime Management Plan, dietary needs, or their My Meals My Way – Profile. Check that they are comfortable with the support you will be providing.
- Wash your hands and put on any required personal protective equipment (PPE) before helping with food or drinks. This helps prevent the spread of germs and keeps the person safe from infection.
- Ask the person or help them to wash and dry their hands before eating.
- Help the person sit upright before their meal — either at a table in the dining room or in a chair by their bed. Sitting upright makes swallowing safer and helps protect their airway.
- If possible, support them to eat in the dining room, as it also makes mealtime a social and enjoyable experience.
- While you are supporting the person with their meal, take time to talk with them. Encourage them to join in the conversation in a way that suits their communication style. This helps make mealtimes more enjoyable, builds connection, and supports a positive experience for both of you.
- Ask the person if they would like to use a serviette or protective clothing to help keep their clothes clean during the meal. This supports their dignity and gives them a choice in how they'd like to be supported.
- Sit at the person's eye level while supporting them with their meal. This helps with clear communication and shows the person that you are giving them your full attention and time. It also helps them feel more comfortable and respected during mealtimes.
- Let the person know what food is on their plate. This is especially important for people who are blind, have low vision, or are eating a pureed meal, as the food may not be easily recognisable.
- When you are helping the person with their meal, ask if they have a preferred order for eating their food and when they'd like to have a drink.
- Also check if they would like any extra seasoning or sauces, as long as it fits with their mealtime plan.

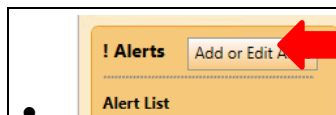
- Ask the person how they would like to receive their food. For example, whether they prefer a fork or a spoon.
- Keep an eye on the person while they're eating and drinking. Watch for any signs of risk, like coughing or choking, and respond quickly to keep them safe.
- Stay focused while supporting the person during their meal. Do not get distracted by what's happening around you or talk with others. Your full attention is needed to keep the person safe. Even a short break in supervision, like leaving to answer the door, can lead to serious risks such as choking.
- After the meal, check that the person is comfortable and has had enough to eat and drink. Encourage them to eat, but don't pressure them if they say they have had enough, respect their choice.
- After the meal, help the person wash their face and hands if they need support.
- Attend to a person's oral care needs as per their Oral Health Care Plan.
- Between meals, remember that people who need help eating will also need help drinking. Make sure to offer and support them to drink regularly.
- Where any new risk is identified, follow the [NDIS LWB 5517 My Meals My Way - Procedure](#)

Report

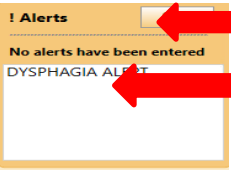
- Record any swallowing or choking incidents or near misses in an i-Report event.
- Complete the appropriate documentation detailing dietary intake, mealtime support and activities. Complete a Progress Note in CIRTS. Complete the Food and Fluid Chart as required
- Record in a Progress Note and report to the Disability Support Leader any request by the person to vary the plan. The Disability Support Leader will raise the request with the person and seek advice from an AQHP.

Disability Support Leader will:

- If a person declines to engage in mealtime support, or makes mealtime decisions that may put them at risk, the Disability Support Leader will escalate the matter to the Regional Operations Manager (ROM).
- Make sure a Dysphagia Alert is documented in section 4, and complete the Risk Management in section 5, of their [NDIS LWB 5001 Client Profile](#).
- Add a Dysphagia Alert in the "! Alerts" section on the person's CIRTS file.



- Open the CIRTS file
- Go to ! Alerts section
- Click on Add or Edit Alert

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add text DYSPHAGIA ALERT. • Click Save
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- Make sure rosters match the person's mealtime support needs.
- Work with an AQHP to learn about and get trained on the person's Mealtime Management Plan.
- Make sure all DSWs are orientated to and understand the person's plan so they can provide the right mealtime support.
- Coach and supervise DSWs to apply the 7 Rights of Mealtime Support.
- Have regular team discussions to reflect on their work and make sure they are providing high-quality meal time support.
- With consent, share and request any Mealtime Management, dietary plans or positive behaviour support plans related to eating and drinking with any other service providers and the health care team. This will ensure that Mealtime Management Plans are known and available to be followed consistently across all support environments and settings.
 - Add a Progress Note in CIRTs to evidence that information and plans have been shared with other service providers or health care teams. In the subject line, include the name of the plan/name of the service provider/date.
- When any new risk is identified, follow the [NDIS LWB 5517 My Meals My Way - Procedure](#). Support the person to seek regular reviews (at least annually) or as required by their AQHP.

Report

- Record any swallowing or choking incidents or near misses in an i-Report event.
- Complete the appropriate documentation detailing dietary intake, mealtime support and activities. Complete a Progress Note in CIRTs. Complete the Food and Fluid Chart as required
- Record in a Progress Note any request by the person to vary the plan and actions taken.
- Escalate any identified risks to the Regional Operations Manager, who will notify the State Director. The State Director will decide whether to escalate it to the High Needs Panel.

Save the Mealtime Management Plan in CIRTs

Save any Mealtime Management Plan or reviews, created by an AQHP for the person we support, in CIRTs as follows:

Plans & Assessments > Plans - < Mealtime Management Plan > SURNAME, First Name. YYYY.MM.DD.

Monitoring & Supervision

The DSL will put into action a planned approach to managing risks for any person identified with a swallowing or choking risk. This will include:

- Ensuring all DSWs have completed all mandatory training, including HIDPA assessment for a person requiring management of severe dysphagia.
- Recording DSW training activities to evidence completion of training, including against any specific Mealtime Management Plan, and the AQHP signs off any HIDPA Skills assessment.
- In managing any identified risks, escalate the issue to the Regional Operations Manager, who will notify the State Director. The State Director will decide whether to escalate it to the High Needs Panel.
- Documenting the supervision approach that strengthens the support worker's ability to identify and respond appropriately to the person's needs, risks and emergencies related to eating and drinking activities.

Review Requirements

All Health Care Plans must be developed by a Health Professional who understands the person's needs. To ensure plans remain relevant, each Health Care Plan must be reviewed at least annually or more often if the needs of the person change.

LWB Disability Support Staff must also monitor the person's health in the context of the STOP AND WATCH principles outlined in the [NDIS LWB 5501 Health and Wellbeing - Procedure](#).

Health Care Plans (including Mealtime Management and any dietary plans) can only be reviewed six (6) times before a new plan **must** be developed. In addition, Health Care Plans can only be reviewed by the Health Professional who developed the plan or another professional with equivalent qualifications.

If the treating Health Professional has changed since the plan was originally developed, the new AQHP may choose to develop their own plan for the person.

Further Advice

For further advice about supporting the person with their plan, please contact the author of the person's Mealtime Management Plan in the first instance or arrange for the person and their plan to be reviewed by an AQHP. Further information about IDDSI, NDISQ Practice Alerts and related resources can be accessed via the Disability Pathway [My Meals My Way](#) page.

NDIS LWB 5523 Mealtime Support - Procedure

