

Summary:

The My Meals My Way Policy Guideline will assist staff in supporting safe and enjoyable mealtimes for all people who access Life Without Barriers (LWB) Disability and Mental Health (DMH) services. This includes identifying and supporting people at risk of dysphagia and those with problems swallowing and/or food and fluid intake.

As choking is a major cause of preventable death for people with a disability, LWB will provide staff with the training and resources to manage choking, dysphagia, and mealtime support. LWB uses a person-centred approach and has the necessary systems for reporting and reviewing near-miss and actual incidents. LWB will advocate for the people we support to access timely medical reviews and NDIS resources where relevant.

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, any authorised decision-makers and/or support network members.

Principles:

- That each person's right to independence, choice and control in decision-making is respected.
- To enable the people we support to express choice and preference, we will actively engage them in all aspects of support and management of their mealtime. This includes incorporating their traditions and culture in the food they eat, defining their eating environments and maintaining a healthy relationship with food.
- Information will be provided to the people we support in a way that suits their communication style. This will ensure they are fully informed of LWB's approach, including how they will identify swallowing problems, seek any required assessment and treatment, and manage their mealtime requirements.
- We believe that people should have the freedom to make choices and control how they manage risks and receive support. Our staff will help people to make informed choices by providing them with easy access to our resources on [independence, informed choice, and capacity](#).
- Staff will assist and support people to create safe, positive, and enjoyable eating environments and mealtimes that reflect a relaxed and pleasant experience.
- All individuals with diagnosed swallowing issues/dysphagia will have a current Mealtime Management Plan, developed by an Appropriately Qualified Health Professional (AQHP) of their choice.

- When a choking or adverse event occurs, this will be escalated to the [Centre for Practice Excellence](#) (CPE). The Practice Support lead will investigate the incident and identify areas of improvement/risk management.
- All requirements under the relevant legislation or standards (e.g., NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators) are incorporated into practice when supporting people to identify and manage dysphagia and swallowing problems.
- LWB will support and develop all staff working in DMH services to identify swallowing and food and fluid intake difficulties, respond to choking, understand referral pathways, and co-create safe, enjoyable, and nutritious meals.
- Staff will prepare texture-modified foods and fluids in accordance with best practice (International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative IDDSI).
- Staff who provide support to people with a Mealtime Management Plan are responsible for completing training that will help them support people with mealtime management requirements. This will include preparing and delivering safe food and fluid intake as per that person's Mealtime Management Plan. Mealtime Management Plans are for clinical purposes and provide advice on modifying food texture, fluid consistency, special dietary therapy, positioning, and safe eating techniques. Training will be provided and assessed (as required) by an AQHP, generally a Speech Pathologist for people with Severe Dysphagia.
- All food preparation, storage, equipment, supplements, enteral feeding formulas, thickening agents and the delivery of meals will comply with Food Standards Australia and New Zealand.

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.

- All people receiving support in Shared and Supported Living and Lifestyle supports will undertake an annual assessment using the [NDIS LWB 5521 Nutrition and Swallowing Risk - Checklist](#) to help identify any risks.
- During the Intake and Engagement process, prospective clients will complete a preliminary questionnaire to determine if they have a current Mealtime Management Plan and help identify any mealtime requirements. Local Client Services teams are responsible for further consideration of mealtime support requirements and swallowing difficulties in the second intake stage.
- Mealtime Management Plans must be reviewed at least every 12 months or earlier if indicated in the Plan or if any changes in circumstances 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 5521 Nutrition and Swallowing Risk - Checklist](#)

[NDIS LWB 5500 Health and Wellbeing – Policy Guideline](#)

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

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

[LWB National Medication – Procedure](#)

[NDIS LWB 936 Statement of Informed Choice](#)

[International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative](#)

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