



Mealtime Management Policy (Simple English)

Purpose

This policy explains how Soaring Sparrows helps participants eat and drink safely. If participants have trouble swallowing (dysphagia), they will be referred to qualified healthcare professionals for assessment and management.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Staff, contractors, and volunteers providing mealtime support
- Participants receiving mealtime assistance
- Families, carers, and advocates providing information

Definitions

- **Dysphagia:** Trouble swallowing, which may include coughing, choking, wet/gurgly voice, or refusing food.
- **Mealtime Management Plan:** A plan created by a healthcare professional (e.g., speech pathologist or dietitian) to guide safe eating and drinking.

Policy Statement

Soaring Sparrows will:

- Provide safe, person-centred mealtime support
- Observe participants for swallowing difficulties and refer to healthcare professionals if needed
- Follow healthcare professional instructions for safe mealtime support
- Train staff to recognise dysphagia and use safe eating and drinking strategies
- Comply with NDIS Practice Standards and the NDIS Code of Conduct

Procedures

1. Identification and Referral

- Staff observe participants while eating and drinking
- Consider information from families, carers, and other providers

- Refer suspected swallowing difficulties to a qualified healthcare professional

2. Supporting Participants

- Follow instructions from healthcare professionals
- Ensure support workers have the Mealtime Management Plan and training
- Inform healthcare professionals of changes or incidents during meals

3. Staff Training

- Recognising signs of dysphagia
- Safe eating and drinking strategies
- Emergency response procedures

4. Monitoring

- Management checks that procedures are followed
- Use feedback from participants, families, and staff to improve support

Responsibilities

Management:

- Train staff and supervise mealtime assistance
- Maintain referral pathways to healthcare professionals

Staff:

- Observe participants and provide safe support
- Collect information from families and other providers
- Refer participants if swallowing difficulties are suspected

Healthcare Professionals:

- Assess participants and provide Mealtime Management Plans as required

Related Legislation

- NDIS Act 2013
- NDIS (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018
- NDIS Code of Conduct

Other Relevant Documents

- NDIS Practice Alert: Dysphagia, safe swallowing and mealtime management (NDIS Commission)
- NDIS Mealtime Management Guidelines (NDIS)

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if:

- Laws or regulations change
- Feedback shows improvements are needed
- An incident highlights gaps