

# Serving Family Style Meals

## Purpose

This document tells how to serve family style meals that are safe to eat.

## Procedure

Meals and snacks must be served family style, including on field trips and other activities where a CACFP meal is served outside of the classroom.

Family style meals help maintain standards of behavior, respect children's food preferences, and makes mealtimes pleasant and child centered. In family style meals, children and classroom staff sit together at the tables. If there is enough food for all children and the teacher to be offered seconds, then children and staff may eat the same foods together.

All staff and volunteers involved in preparing and serving food in the classroom must obtain a [Washington State Food Worker Card](#) within 10 days of hire and post a copy of the current card in an easily accessible location. All staff and volunteers must also follow the hand washing procedure in *Classroom Health Routines*.

## Preparing Meals

- Staff who prepare and serve food must follow food handling procedures in the [Washington State Food and Beverage Worker's Manual](#), **except hot foods must be held at 140° F or higher.**
- Food must be prepared in an approved kitchen or food service establishment
- Foods purchased from grocery stores must be obtained in their original packages and maintained at safe temperatures while transporting to the center/site.
- Donated foods are not allowed because the quality and safety cannot be guaranteed.

## Modeling to Children

During mealtimes, model to children how to serve themselves using the serving utensils and by taking small tastes of the food served. This encourages children who may not have served themselves a specific food item (e.g. a vegetable) or an unfamiliar food. Tell children how much of each food to take. Refer to [Helping Young Children Learn to Serve Themselves in Group Settings](#).

Early Head Start staff are expected to facilitate family style meals with toddlers and will need to provide hand and verbal assistance.

## Serving Meals

- At least one adult sits at each table with children to help children pass foods from common platters and bowls.
- Pass food around the table until everyone has been able to serve themselves each food or has been offered foods at least twice. Children must be offered foods twice for family style meals to be creditable.
- Use child-sized utensils, bowls, and plates.
- Adults honor a division of responsibility during mealtimes. Refer to [Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding](#).



Mealtimes for children are part of class time. Teachers should not bring food not being served to children to the table. Teachers are not expected to put every component on their plate.