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## Policy - Mealtime Management (disability)

Headway Gippsland is committed to ensuring that each participant requiring mealtime management (such as participants with any swallowing difficulties/dysphagia) is provided with meals which are of high quality, nutritious and of a texture that is appropriate to their individual needs. Headway Gippsland will ensure that meals are appropriately planned and meet participants' needs and preferences, including dietary intolerances, allergies and medication contraindications. Headway Gippsland is committed to providing participants with meals which support nutrition, hydration and good health.

### Procedures

#### Mealtime management planning - intake

As part of our intake process, Headway Gippsland will identify all participants who have mealtime management requirements, including any difficulty with swallowing (ie dysphagia).

Headway Gippsland will consult with the participant and/or their representative to determine any mealtime management needs, and seek a copy of their Meal Time management plan

Headway Gippsland will also ensure that workers look out for potential signs and symptoms of dysphagia in participants, including:

- difficult, painful chewing or swallowing;
- coughing, choking, or frequent throat clearing during or after swallowing;
- having long mealtimes e.g. finishing a meal takes more than 30 minutes;
- becoming short of breath when eating and drinking;
- avoiding some foods because they are hard to swallow;
- regurgitation of undigested food;
- difficulty controlling food or liquid in their mouth;
- drooling;
- having a hoarse or gurgly voice;
- having a dry mouth;
- poor oral hygiene;
- frequent heartburn;
- unexpected weight loss; and
- frequent respiratory infections.

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### Mealtime management planning - assessment

Each participant who is identified as requiring mealtime management will have their individual needs assessed by an appropriately qualified health practitioner. Generally,

- A **dietician** (if involved) is responsible for assessing nutritional status and providing individually adapted nutritional advice on a participant's meal plan.
- A **speech pathologist** (if involved) is responsible for assessing individuals with feeding, eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties.
- An **occupational therapist** (if involved) is responsible for assessing individuals who have difficulty with feeding due to a physical, cognitive or psychological disability. The OT can suggest adaptations, techniques, positioning and/or aids and equipment to facilitate and maintain independence.

Headway Gippsland will ensure that each worker responsible for providing mealtime management to a participant is provided with a copy of their mealtime management plan this will be found available on the clients file accessible by CRM app these will also be emailed out to the support worker when new supports begin.

### Worker responsibilities

Workers at Headway Gippsland will assist in-preparing and providing texture-modified foods and fluids in accordance with the mealtime management plans for participants.

Workers are to check that meals for participants are of the correct texture, as identified in their plans.

Workers at Headway Gippsland who provide mealtime management, will be responsible for understanding the needs of participants, and the steps to take if safety incidents occur during meals, such as coughing or choking on food or fluids.

During mealtimes, workers will support participants as required, in accordance with their mealtime support plans, through measures including:

- supporting participants to maintain a safe body position (this may include repositioning the participant during the meal);
- providing specific mealtime assistance techniques, including any reminders about a safe rate of eating, or a safe amount of food in each mouthful;
- responding to coughing or choking and making sure risks are monitored while a person is eating or drinking; and
- providing appropriate eating and drinking aids where required.

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### **Food storage and labelling**

Meals to be provided to participants will be stored safely and in accordance with health standards.

Meals for participants requiring mealtime management will be clearly labelled to identify them as meals for a particular participant and differentiate them from meals for other participants.