

FEEDING STUDENTS IN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION ON
SAFE MEALTIME PRACTICES
FOR SPECIAL STUDENTS



Diana Roberts, M.Ed., Editor

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Revised and Amended by:

Gayl Bowser, Coordinator

Regional and Statewide Services for Students with Orthopedic Impairments

Janet Goewey, PT, *Central Oregon Regional Program*

Nancy Hitchcock, OTR, *Central Oregon Regional Program*

Bonnie Jacks, SLP, *Portland Public Schools*

Candice McBeth, RN, *Multnomah ESD*

Darlene Meyer, OTR, *Jackson ESD*

Diana Roberts, M.Ed.

Regional and Statewide Program for Students with Orthopedic Impairments

Louise Sea, SLP, *Willamette Regional Program*

Diane Smith, MA, RD, *Child Development and Rehabilitation Center*

Diane Tipton, SLP, *Central Oregon Regional Program*

Word Processing and Layout:

Judy Shepard, *Regional and Statewide Services for Students
with Orthopedic Impairments*

With special thanks to:

Ruth Jones, SLP, *Medford School District*

The Jackson ESD Feeding Team

The Douglas ESD Feeding Team

Diana Roberts, M.Ed., Editor
Regional and Statewide Services for Students
with Orthopedic Impairments
Douglas ESD
1871 NE Stephens
Roseburg, OR 97470

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 1992, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) developed a technical assistance manual entitled, *Feeding Students in School: Providing Guidelines and Information about Safe Feeding Practices for Special Students*. This manual provided general information about feeding concerns, defined protected feeding in contrast to remedial feeding, and offered tools for implementing and recording both types of mealtime programs. It contained plans, protocols and forms. We are indebted to the writers of that manual for their vision and initiative in developing the original guidelines about feeding in Oregon educational programs, upon which this revision is based. They are, **Sandra Hall**, M.S., OTR, **Karen Yohn**, RN, **Penny R. Reed**, Ph. D, and **Karen Brazeau**.

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Ruth Jones, SLP, who with the Jackson County Feeding Team, developed the original district process, and who has shared her expertise with feeding teams around the state of Oregon.

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Diana Roberts, Consulting Teacher

Gayl Bowser, Coordinator

Regional and Statewide Services for Students with Orthopedic Impairments

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INTRODUCTION

*The Goal of Eating in Educational Programs:
“To provide adequate calories and nutrients in the safest
and most pleasurable manner in the least restrictive environment.”
Barbara Neely, R.N., B.S.N., N.C.S.N.
Director of School Health Services, Multnomah ESD*

The number of children with severe disabilities who are served in general and special education classrooms and EI/ECSE programs in Oregon continues to increase. In 1999, there were 789 school-aged children in Oregon who qualified for special education services as students with orthopedic impairments. In addition, 2,607 children were identified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder or other disabilities with potential for feeding problems. Many of these children are unable to feed themselves or have a swallowing problem or other disorder which puts them at risk for choking or aspiration. These life-threatening risks to children and the liability to school districts are significant. Assuring student safety is a primary responsibility of the school district.

In educational settings physicians are typically not available to answer questions, identify and attend to critical medical issues, or respond to emergency situations. Specialists such as speech/language pathologists (SLP's), occupational therapists (OT's), physical therapists (PT's), school nurses (RN's), and Registered Dietitians (RD's) who may provide support to students in educational programs may fill this role, but are not always available for consultation. On-site educational staff do not have the expertise to address specific feeding or eating difficulties if they arise. Therefore, it is important that procedures for safe feeding at school or in EI/ECSE settings be in place, and that mealtime programs and feeding protocols be developed. It is imperative that people who feed children every day be trained to understand and carry out these programs. All of these factors must be addressed to insure the safe feeding of students who are medically fragile and at risk for aspiration and malnutrition or other life threatening situations. These students are the focus of concern for this document.

Each local education agency and IEP/IFSP team must make decisions about how to handle feeding questions. Decisions must be based on the needs of the child, the skills of the professionals working with the student and the resources available to the district. This manual is intended as a guide for school districts in making decisions and developing procedures which insure student safety, comply with the provisions and procedural safeguards of the law, and make sense within the context of the local community.

