

# Checklist

Meal and snack times are busy times in Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC). Whether food is provided by your child care or families, all ELCC settings can promote positive eating environments for children. Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat – it's also about where, when, why, and how you eat.

This checklist can help you look at how different parts of your child care support positive meal and snack times. Since ELCC settings vary, these ideas may need to be adapted for your specific setting.

Find out what you are doing well and what you could do better. Then, make a plan for next steps.

### **Part 1: Review what's happening at your meal and snack times**

Educators, dayhome providers, and others who observe meal and snack times may want to complete this part. This part looks at:

- Social time
- Healthy food choices
- Child-friendly setting
- Child learning

### **Part 2: Review your overall program**

Directors, supervisors, dayhome providers, and other lead staff may want to complete this part. This part looks at how your overall program:

- Supports learning in your program
- Enhances partnerships
- Supports policy

### **Part 3: Plan next steps for your child care**

Take some time to review your completed checklist with your staff, and think about next steps. This part looks at:

- What is your ELCC doing well? Celebrate your successes!
- How can you make your ELCC better?
- How will your ELCC work on these areas?

## Part 1: Review what's happening at meal and snack times

Educators, dayhome providers, and others who observe meal and snack times may want to complete this part.

Recommendations	How are you doing?			Comments (or not applicable)
	Great!	Okay...	Needs work	
<b>Promote social time</b>				
Sit together with children at meal and snack times.				
Engage children in friendly conversation.				
Limit distractions like toys, phones, and other screens.				
Make meal and snack times relaxed and pleasant.				
<b>Promote healthy food choices</b>				
Offer a variety of healthy food and drinks.				
When possible, eat the same foods with the children.				
Include cultural and traditional foods.				
Have more food available if children are still hungry.				
Offer new foods many times, prepared in different ways.				
Ensure water is always available.				
<b>Promote a child friendly setting</b>				
Plan meals and snacks at regular times.				
Use routines and transitions before and after meal and snack times.				
Allow about 20-30 minutes to eat meals and about 10-15 minutes to eat snacks.				
Create a child-friendly setting, with age appropriate dishes, utensils, and seating.				
<b>Promote child learning</b>				
Lead by example at meal and snack times. Model language, social skills, table manners, and eating habits for children.				
Involve children in preparing food.				
Involve children in setting and clearing the table.				
Help children serve themselves.				
Teach children to start with small amounts of food, and to take more if still hungry.				
Let children decide how much to eat from foods offered.				
Listen to children when they say they are full.				
Do not use food to pressure, bribe, or reward.				

## Part 2: Review your overall ELCC

Directors, supervisors, and other lead staff may want to complete this part.

Recommendations	How are you doing?			Examples and Comments (or not applicable)
	Great!	Okay...	Needs work	
<b>Support learning</b>				
Offer learning opportunities on healthy eating for staff.				
Share healthy eating information and resources with families.				
Help children learn about food outside of meal and snack times, with nutrition activities like stories and crafts.				
<b>Enhance partnerships</b>				
Partner with families to support children.				
Work with health services and other child care programs to support consistent healthy eating practices.				
<b>Strengthen policy</b>				
Promote healthy food choices and positive eating attitudes and behaviours through your child care policy.				
Share your policy with families.				
Ensure staffing routines and transitions support positive meal and snack times.				

# Support Positive Mealtimes Resources

## Part 3: Plan next steps for your ELCC

Review your completed checklist with staff and plan next steps. You can do this for Part 1, Part 2, or both.

### 1. What is your ELCC doing well? Celebrate your successes!

Each 'Great!' response is an action that supports positive meal and snack times in your child care.

1.
2.

### 2. How can you make your ELCC better?

Find the questions that were marked 'Okay' or 'Needs some work.'  
Choose one or two that your child care could change to 'Great!'

1.
2.

### 3. How will your ELCC work on these areas?

Make a plan for how you will work on the areas you identified above. Think about what resources you will need, how you will share with your team and when will you repeat the checklist.

1.
2.

Resources for healthy food choices, staff training, and policy can be found at the *Healthy Eating in Early Learning and Child Cares* page at: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page8941.aspx>.