

Everyone Plays a Role

Supporting Healthy Eating

for Children and Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) receive services from multiple professionals within early care and education, school, health care, community, and home settings. These professionals are part of a child's support team. Each member of the team plays a role promoting a child's healthy eating behaviors.



Everyone

- Teach healthy eating habits.
- Empower children and youth to take responsibility for their own health, based on their developmental level.
- Reinforce the 5-2-1-0 message.
- Role model healthy eating behaviors.
- Help families and caregivers reinforce healthy messages and strategies at home.

Case Managers

- Request services to address eating problems that interfere with a child's physical or mental health.
- Ensure alignment of healthy eating goals and strategies in education and service plans.

Classroom Teachers

- Teach the difference between healthy and unhealthy food choices.

Health Care Providers

- Talk to families about the importance of a healthy, balanced diet.
- Discuss how a patient's eating behaviors affect their physical and mental health.
- Recommend healthy eating goals for a patient's education and service plans.

Occupational Therapists

- Help determine when choosy eating behaviors require closer attention.
- Address sensitivities that impact eating.
- Help a child develop oral and fine motor skills related to eating.

School Nurses

- Serve as a liaison with other health care providers.
- Inform all team members about a student's food allergies and dietary restrictions.
- Inform all team members about how a student's medications may affect appetite.

Special Education Teachers

- Learn about the child's challenges to making healthy food choices and develop strategies to address them.
- Share effective healthy eating strategies with other members of the team.

Speech and Language Pathologists

- Help determine when a child's choosy eating behaviors require closer attention.
- Create [social stories](#) about healthy eating.

TIP

Coordination and consistency are key to helping children and youth adopt healthy eating behaviors.