



**COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO
PRESCHOOL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
POLICY**

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SUBJECT:
Punishment and Rewards at Meal Time

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PURPOSE

Feeding time should be a positive and pleasant social time for children and adults in the Head Start Program.

POLICY

Food is not used as a punishment or reward, and that each child is encouraged, but not forced to eat or taste his or her food.

REFERENCE

Head Start Performance Standards **1304.23 (c)(2)**

PROCEDURE

As teachers and parents it's important to understand that children may not eat the same amount every day or be hungry at the same time each day. With this in mind, if a child refuses food or does not finish their food, avoid punishing or rewarding the child. Here are some examples of what is **not** appropriate at the meal time table:

- **Forcing children to put food on their plate and try it, even though they have clearly indicated that they do not want it. Remember as part of CACFP we always want to encourage the child to try and take the full portion but we never force the issue.**
- Leading children to sing a song if they clean their plate or drink all of their milk.
- Ringing a cow bell when children drink all of their milk.
- Giving out stars or stickers for clean plates.
- Making children eat all of one food on their plate before they can have more of another item.
- Refusing a child a second serving when there is extra available.
- Adding food coloring to milk so children will drink more etc.

In a situation where a child only wants one item, remind them of the other friends at the table who still need to serve themselves. When dealing with seconds and full portions are not available for all children, cut the item up into fourths so more than one child can have extras.

Remember meal time in Head Start should be a pleasant experience and by following a few simple guidelines we may help to prevent feeding problems in the future.