

## ***Who and What of Swallowing and Feeding in the Schools***

### **What is a swallowing and feeding disorder?**

Feeding and swallowing disorders (also known as *dysphagia*) include

- difficulty with any step of the feeding process—from accepting foods and liquids into the mouth to the entry of food into the stomach and intestines.
- includes developmentally atypical eating and drinking behaviors, such as not accepting age-appropriate liquids or foods, being unable to use age-appropriate feeding devices and utensils, or being unable to self-feed.

### **What are the complications of a swallowing and feeding disorder?**

Illness related to:

- Dehydration
- Pneumonia
- Under nutrition
- Choking risk

### **What is the Educational Relevance?**

According to IDEA, all students are entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Health services are included in IDEA as a related service that helps ensure FAPE. In order for a child to have FAPE, he/she must be healthy, well-nourished and hydrated so that they can:

- Attend school
- Benefit fully from academic instruction
- Socialize with peers
- Efficiently complete mealtimes

### **Who is at risk for dysphagia?**

Swallowing disorders occur in all age groups, from newborns to the elderly and can occur as a result of a variety of congenital abnormalities, structural damage, and neurological disease or disorder. Primarily those at high risk for a swallowing disorder are those who may be identified as:

- Developmental disabilities
- Neurological disorders (cerebral palsy, PDD, TBI, etc.)
- Genetic syndromes
- Structural abnormalities
- Sensory issues
- Behavioral factors
- Complex medical conditions
- Autism
- Cognitive deficits
- Students taking certain Medications (such as diuretics, antihypertensive, and antidepressants)

### **What are the signs and symptoms of a swallowing and feeding disorder?**

Repeated respiratory infections	Maintains open mouth posture	Poor oral motor functioning
History of recurring pneumonia	Drooling	Nasal regurgitation
Weight loss/failure to thrive	Food refusal	Wet/gurgle voice/sound after meal
Difficulty chewing	prolonged feeding times	Pocketing – food remains in mouth
Coughing/choking during or after swallowing		Difficulty initiating swallowing