

# Best Practice Document to Use as Guidance when Developing Orientation for Food Service Workers and Cooks

## Introduction and Purpose:

Nutrition and the quality of food within long-term care homes is of great importance to the health and well-being of residents. Recent changes to [Ontario Regulation 246/22](#) (O. Reg. 246/22) under the [Fixing Long-Term Care Act \(FLTCA\), 2021](#) are intended to provide long-term care homes with more flexibility to recruit and hire qualified dietary staff to support resident quality of care and quality of life. For example, long-term care homes can draw from an expanded pool of qualified candidates to pursue careers as food service workers and cooks in long-term care.

In long-term care settings, proper onboarding and training of food service workers and cooks is especially critical due to the prevalence of chronic conditions, swallowing difficulties, and other complex dietary requirements among residents. The role of food service workers and cooks in long-term care homes is crucial, as they play a central role in ensuring that residents receive appropriate and nutritious meals and snacks that meet their unique dietary needs and take into account individual preferences and cultural backgrounds.

The purpose of this document is to help disseminate best practices (identified through discussions with long-term care homes, residents and families, and other sector partners and stakeholders, such as long-term care sector associations and registered dietitians) for onboarding and training dietary staff (e.g., food service workers, cooks), particularly where qualified individuals have little or no prior long-term care experience. These best practices are provided for informational purposes only. The training and orientation that long-term care home licensees are required to provide to staff are set out in the FLTCA and O. Reg. 246/22 in addition to the other rules that govern long-term care homes. In the event of any conflict between

this best practice document and the FLTCA and O. Reg. 246/22, the Act and Regulation prevail.

### **Best Practices for Establishing a Supportive and Comprehensive Onboarding/ Training Program for Food Service Workers and Cooks:**

1. Develop Clear Policies and Procedures: Create policies and procedures that outline expectations for dietary staff, including job responsibilities and safety protocols.

During onboarding and training, it is important for long-term care homes to cover their specific policies and procedures. This could include the home's mission statement, emergency codes, policies on confidentiality, protocols for reporting resident abuse/neglect, and workplace violence and harassment, as well as specific safety expectations for the kitchen, such as how to manage fire safety. In addition, training should be provided on occupational health and safety. For the minimum training and orientation requirements, licensees may wish to review section 82 of the FLTCA as a starting point.

2. Establish a Comprehensive Orientation Program: Provide an orientation program that covers the long-term care home's policies, procedures, and the role of dietary staff in supporting residents' health and well-being. Include cultural training and sensitization (such as educating staff on cultural/religious food restrictions, preferences and food practices), training on food safety, sanitation, and nutrition guidelines specific to long-term care, etc. Refer to the "Onboarding and Training Topics" listed below for best practices that can be incorporated into your home's program.
3. Assign a Mentor: When possible, assign an experienced dietary staff member as a mentor to new hires to provide support and guidance throughout the orientation and training process.

4. Offer Ongoing Training and Education: Provide dietary staff with opportunities for ongoing training and education to stay up-to-date with current food safety, sanitation, and nutrition practices. This can include workshops, conferences, online and virtual courses and modules.
5. Conduct / Leverage Regular Performance Reviews: Implement / leverage regular performance reviews as a tool to identify gaps in knowledge and skills and to determine areas where individuals or teams may require additional training or education. This will help foster a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that dietary staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide high-quality care and support for residents.

### **Onboarding and Training Topics:**

Given the diversity of resident populations and staff across long-term care homes in Ontario, it is important that long-term care home licensees have the flexibility to tailor their approach to onboarding and training in a manner that is best suited to their home's unique circumstances while also adhering to the requirements for training and orientation set out in the FLTCA and O. Reg. 246/22. While this best practice document provides a list of key topics to consider when onboarding and training dietary staff, specifically food service workers and cooks, it is recognized that each long-term care home is best placed to identify the knowledge and training needs of their staff, and to take appropriate steps to address those needs. The following topics provide a base list of examples for long-term care homes to consider when onboarding and training dietary staff. It is important to note that this document does not represent an exhaustive list of topics, and that homes are encouraged to expand upon this list to meet the unique needs of their residents and staff.

a.) Food service and food safety – examples:

- Understanding the basic fundamentals around infection prevention and control (IPAC), such as proper handwashing (e.g., the four moments of hand hygiene), cleaning and disinfection, and wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

- Safe food handling practices, such as preventing contamination and spoilage through proper food storage, controlling temperature of food and equipment, methods for avoiding cross-contamination, managing allergens and intolerances, maintaining sanitation, and following dishwashing protocols.
- Preventing, identifying, and responding to food safety hazards, such as outbreaks of foodborne illness, by taking food and equipment temperatures, documenting waste and leftovers, and implementing pest control measures.
- Education on the safe operation of different types of kitchen equipment, including preventative maintenance, to ensure equipment is functioning properly.

b.) Texture modification – examples:

- Understanding different texture modifications, including minced or pureed textures, as well as nectar or honey thickened fluids, for residents with dysphagia or other swallowing difficulties.
- Preparing and serving textured modified foods that meet nutritional requirements and food safety standards, with specific examples for cooks on how to use thickeners if these products are used in the long-term care home.

c.) Supporting a safe and enjoyable dining experience – examples:

- Key concepts, practice recommendations, and interventions to improve the food and fluid intake of residents with dementia and responsive behaviours.
- Best practices for evaluating, monitoring, and preparing meals for residents with food allergies and intolerances.
- Understanding safe techniques and practices to promote a safe eating experience for residents who require assistance with eating or drinking (e.g., proper positioning, identifying/reporting/monitoring swallowing/chewing concerns).
- Proactive methods to mitigate/reduce the risk of choking and aspiration during meal and snack service.
- Understanding assistive aides, such as special utensils, cups, and plates to support resident independence.

d.) Proper meal and snack service, including how to interpret point-of-service communication tools – examples:

- Using point-of-service communication tools, such as meal ordering systems or dietary restriction flags.
- Process to ensure awareness of the residents' diets, special needs and preferences.
- Working collaboratively with other staff members involved in meal and snack service, such as nursing staff, nutrition managers and personal support workers.
- Understanding meal and snack service processes, including following seating plans, table rotations based on individual resident requirements, setting up snack carts, and preparing for room service (if applicable).

e.) Human element to supporting meal and snack service as part of resident quality of life – examples:

- Providing respectful, dignified meal, and snack service that recognizes residents' individual preferences and cultural backgrounds.
- Understanding the importance of the dining experience to residents' quality of life and overall health and well-being.
- Communicating effectively with residents and their families about meal- or snack-related concerns or feedback.

f.) Instructional cooking techniques – examples:

- Learning how to prepare food that meets specific nutritional requirements (e.g., Dietary Reference Intakes), dietary restrictions, and texture modifications.
- Understanding the importance of creativity and flexibility in adapting recipes to meet resident needs and preferences.

g.) Menu interpretation and scaling recipes – examples:

- Learning how to create standardized recipes to accommodate different cultural preferences, texture modifications, and resident requests.
- Knowing how to interpret menus and recipes to ensure that meals and snacks meet nutritional requirements while considering dietary restrictions and food allergies.

- Understanding how to scale recipes based on the number of servings needed.

h.) Resident rights and satisfaction related to meal and snack service – examples:

- Understanding residents' rights related to meal and snack service, including the right to choose their meals, snacks, and dining times (e.g., liberalized diet approach, residents' right to refuse modified textures or thickened fluids), while ensuring safety plans are in place before serving.
- Understanding resident's right to decline nutrition or hydration interventions, regardless of risk (Residents Bill of Rights as outlined in the FLTCA ).
- Process for reporting and responding to complaints or concerns related to meal and snack service in a respectful and timely manner.
- Communicating effectively with residents and their families about meal- and snack-related issues and feedback to ensure their satisfaction with the service.

**List of Resources:**

*Note: The links and information provided in this table were accurate at the time of publication. However, as these external web pages are not under the control of the province, the accuracy, relevance, or completeness of the information found on them may change over time and without notice.*

| Resource and Link   | Description  |
|---|--|
| <p>OSNAC and FNAT Library of Best Practices</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://osnac-fnat.com">Best Practice   OSNAC &amp; FNAT (osnac-fnat.com)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: OSNAC-FNAT</p> | <p>Best Practice Documents for Clinicians, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent to Treatment</li> <li>• Dementia and Responsive Behaviours</li> <li>• Diabetes Management</li> <li>• Liberalized Diets</li> <li>• Nutrition Assessment and Plan of Care</li> <li>• Preparing for a Ministry Inspection</li> <li>• Menu Planning Best Practices (e.g., menu</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>evaluation, changes, approvals)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul> <p>Customizable Templates, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistive Device Guide</li> <li>• Sample Daily RD Report</li> <li>• Sample Data Collection Tool</li> <li>• Sample Dietary Referral Form</li> <li>• Sample High Nutritional Risk Monitoring Tool</li> <li>• Sample Nutrition Manager Initial Visit Tool</li> <li>• Sample Nutrition Risk ID Tool</li> <li>• Sample Resident Assessment Protocol Template</li> <li>• Sample Templates for Menu Evaluation, Changes and Approvals</li> <li>• Sample Velocity Report Request Letter</li> </ul> |
| <p>Ontario Seniors Nutrition &amp; Advocacy Committee (OSNAC) and Food &amp; Nutrition Advisory Team (FNAT) Library of Resources</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://osnac-fnat.com">Resources   OSNAC &amp; FNAT (osnac-fnat.com)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: OSNAC-FNAT</p> | <p>Helpful resources for dietary staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An overview of proposed changes to Menu Planning legislation (effective January 2022)</li> <li>• Reference materials and expert guidance for employees, families, and residents on culturally</li> </ul>  |

| Resource and Link   | Description  |
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| <p>Menu Planning in Long-Term Care: What's Next</p> <p>Link: <a href="#">Menu Planning in LTC - What's Next? (LEGAL FORM VERSION) (8.5 x 14 in) (ontarc.com)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: OSNAC-FNAT</p>  | <p>inclusive menu planning, malnutrition, etc.</p> <p>Comprehensive guide on menu planning for long-term care homes, covering recent regulatory changes that increase flexibility in menu style and meal-times (effective July 11, 2022). Emphasizes the importance of following Dietary Reference Intakes standards.</p>  |
| <p>Eating Assistance e-Course - Ontario Centres for Learning, Research, and Innovation in Long-Term Care (CLRI-LTC)</p> <p>Link: <a href="#">Eating Assistance eCourse - Ontario Centres for Learning, Research, and Innovation in Long-Term Care (clri-ltc.ca)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: CLRI in Long-Term Care</p> | <p>An online course designed to provide knowledge and skills to staff working in long-term care to help them support residents in achieving nutritional goals and promote healthy eating habits. Covers various topics, including nutrition assessment, menu planning, texture modification, and special diets.</p>  |
| <p>Georgian College Food Service Worker e-Courses</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.georgiancollege.ca/academics/part-time-studies/programs/food-service-worker-fswr/">https://www.georgiancollege.ca/academics/part-time-studies/programs/food-service-worker-fswr/</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: Georgian College</p>  | <p>An online program that focuses on the role of food service workers. Comprises 6 courses that provide staff with the knowledge and skills needed to work in food service in settings, such as long-term care homes, hospitals, and schools. Covers topics, such as nutrition, safety and sanitation, and food preparation.</p> <p><i>Note: these courses are not free.</i></p> |



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| <p>Staffing Qualifications Factsheet<br/>                     Link: <a href="https://www.ltchomes.net/20230406-EN-staffing-qualifications-factsheet-20230406.pdf">20230406-EN-staffing-qualifications-factsheet-20230406.pdf (ltchomes.net)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: The Ministry of Long-term Care</p>                                | <p>An overview of new and amended provisions to O. Reg. 246/22 related to long-term care staffing role qualifications requirements (effective April 11, 2023).</p>   |
| <p>Dietitians of Canada Menu Planning Tool<br/>                     Link: <a href="https://osnac-fnat.com">Dietitians of Canada (osnac-fnat.com)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: Dietitians of Canada</p>   | <p>A guideline for the development and implementation of person-centered care plans in long-term care homes. It outlines the essential components of person-centered care and provides practical tips and tools for delivering care that focuses on the individual's needs, preferences, and goals. The guide aims to promote quality of life, autonomy, and dignity for residents in long-term care settings.</p> |
| <p>Nutrition in Disguise Training Program and Recipe Box<br/>                     Link: <a href="https://clri-ltc.ca/nutrition-in-disguise-recipes">Nutrition in Disguise Recipes - Ontario Centres for Learning, Research, and Innovation in Long-Term Care (clri-ltc.ca)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: The Ministry of Long-term Care</p> | <p>A useful resource for menu planners and food service workers in long-term care homes which provides a wide-variety of healthy recipes while highlighting the importance of incorporating key ingredients into menus to support the health and well-being of residents, with a focus on preventing/managing common chronic health conditions through nutrition.</p>  |

| Resource and Link   | Description  |
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| <p>Food and Nutrition in Long-Term Care Homes – An audit conducted by the Auditor General on Food and Nutrition in Long-Term Care Homes</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/files/305-food-and-nutrition-in-long-term-care-homes">3.05 Food and Nutrition in Long-Term-Care Homes (auditor.on.ca)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, Canada (2019 report: Volume 1, Chapter 3)</p> | <p>An annual report conducted by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, Canada, identifies several shortcomings in long-term care food and nutrition services and makes recommendations for improvement, including enhancing menu variety, increasing staffing levels, and improving communication between staff and residents.</p> |
| <p>Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Standards for Long-Term Care Homes</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.ltchomes.net/files/12-IPAC-Standard-EN.pdf">12. IPAC Standard - EN.pdf (ltchomes.net)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: The Ministry of Long-Term Care</p>   | <p>Guidelines and best practices for preventing and controlling infections in long-term care homes, including recommendations on safe food handling practices, PPE, and outbreak management.</p>   |
| <p>Canadian Remote Access for Dementia Learning Experiences+ (CRADLE+)</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.d2l.com/en-ca/learning-experiences-plus/">Canadian Remote Access for Dementia Learning Experiences+ (CRADLE+) (d2l.com)</a></p> <p>The Primary Source of this Information: The course was developed by the Canadian Institute for Seniors Care at Conestoga College</p>  | <p>A free course that aims to provide unregulated care providers with evidence-informed, person-centred approaches to dementia care, enabling staff to meaningfully connect and support people living with dementia and their care partners.</p>   |
| <p>Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021 and O. Reg. 246/22</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.ontario.ca/en/legislation/proposals/fixing-long-term-care-act-2021-s-o-2021-c-39-sched-1">Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, S.O. 2021, c. 39, Sched. 1 (ontario.ca)</a></p> <p>Link: in <a href="https://www.ontario.ca/en/legislation/proposals/o-reg-246-22-general">O. Reg. 246/22: GENERAL (ontario.ca)</a></p>  | <p>The FLTCA is a provincial legislation that regulates long-term care homes. The purposes for regulating this sector are included in the preamble of the Act.</p>   |

| <b>Resource and Link</b>  | <b>Description</b> |
|---|--------------------|
| The Primary Source of this Information: The Government of Ontario |                    |