

CHOICE+ Mealtime Practices Checklist Instructions

Relationships between team members and residents in long-term care can have a big impact on how a resident experiences mealtimes. The atmosphere and physical aspects of the dining room can also play a big part in creating a relaxing and enjoyable dining experience. CHOICE+ is an innovative program that looks to improve the mealtime experience by focusing on relationship-centred practices and the dining environment. CHOICE+ is made up of 6 principles:

Connecting – meaningful conversations and socializing
Honouring Dignity – respecting decisions, choices, and preferences
Offering Support – supporting residents based on individual needs
Intity – knowing and accepting residents as unique individuals
Creating Opportunities – supporting active mealtime participation
Enjoyment – creating a calm and welcoming dining environment

What is the CHOICE+ Mealtime Practices Checklist?

The CHOICE+ Mealtime Practices Checklist (MPC) was created as part of the CHOICE+ program to help team members in long-term care work towards achieving the CHOICE+ principles. It helps team members reflect on their current practices and work toward relationship-centred practices. MPC can be used to improve mealtime experiences for all residents, in particular those who need eating assistance and those who do not communicate with words.

Who should use MPC?

MPC was designed for team members in long-term care (e.g., dietary team members, recreation team members, personal support workers, registered practical nurses, leadership) – essentially, any team members who provide support during mealtimes.

How to complete MPC:

On MPC, each CHOICE+ principle is broken down into 4-8 relationship-centred practices, identifying specific actions that can improve the mealtime experience. Team members can complete the entire MPC in one sitting, over a set period of time (e.g., 1 week), or focus in on one principle at a time (e.g., 1 principle/week or every few weeks). Team members read the statements and reflect on how often they used these practices at mealtimes over the past few days. MPC uses “I” statements to encourage team members to think about their own actions.

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Team members then select a rating for each practice:

- **Most of the time:** At most meals I practice this relationship-centred goal.
- **Sometimes:** At some, but not all meals, I practice this relationship-centred goal.
- **Rarely:** I do not regularly, or at all, practice this relationship-centred goal.
- Write **'N/A'** to indicate that this goal is not applicable to you and/or your setting.

Remember that the MPC outlines the ideal practices or goals of CHOICE+, don't worry if there are a number of ratings of 'Sometimes' and 'Rarely'.

Using MPC to make goals and track progress:

Once team members have completed MPC, it is important to discuss reflections on practice as a team. Consider setting a specific meeting time to discuss MPC responses or plan to talk about it at an existing meeting, like a huddle or shift change. Ask team members who are comfortable to share some of their successes (practices that they rated 'Most of the time') and some opportunity areas (practices that they rated as 'Sometimes' or 'Never'). As a team, pick a few practices and discuss how the team can start making them a regular part of meals. Together, make a plan and set goals, discuss who needs to be involved and how the team will know when the goal is reached (e.g., using MPC again in a few weeks' time to check in). Neighbourhood teams are encouraged to problem-solve together and find creative and relationship-centred solutions that meet the needs of residents. Keeping home management informed on plans and progress is also important as they can provide helpful support. And don't forget to celebrate successes – big or small!

How often should MPC be used?

MPC can be completed weekly or monthly, or when there is a need to refocus on improving the mealtime experience. Completing the checklist more frequently will help to keep mealtime goals in mind and make self-reflection a regular exercise. It will also help teams to identify aspects of mealtimes that are going well, and areas for improvement. It is recommended that this checklist be completed no less than once per month if the intention is to change, improve and monitor mealtime practices.

Please note: MPC is meant to help team members in long-term care reflect on their current practices and start making goals and action plans to achieve more relationship-centred practices. It is not an objective measure, but is to be used as a guide and a place to start conversations about improving the mealtime experience for residents in long-term care.

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