

FEEDING FAMILIES WITH FEEDING DISORDERS

A GUIDE FOR FOOD BANKS & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Every family deserves access to food that their child can eat safely. However, some children can't eat the same foods as others because of an underlying feeding disorder.

What are feeding disorders? Feeding disorders are not “picky eating.” They are medical, skill-based, emotional, and/or mental health conditions that make eating difficult, painful, or scary. Two of the most common feeding disorders are PFD and ARFID.

Pediatric Feeding Disorder

PFD is a medical diagnosis describing children who struggle to eat enough or safely due to difficulties in any of four areas: medical, nutritional, feeding skill, or psychosocial.

Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder

ARFID is a mental health diagnosis describing individuals who restrict food because of sensory sensitivities, fear of choking or vomiting, or lack of interest in food.

These conditions affect 1 in 23 children in the US, impacting families of all backgrounds.

What Feeding Disorders May Look Like

Families visiting your food bank may share or show:

- Limited food lists or specific brands/textures (e.g., only smooth purées, certain colors, or specific packaging).
- Dependence on formula, nutritional drinks, or supplements (even for older children).
- Food allergies, GI issues, or medical equipment like feeding tubes.
- Anxiety or emotional distress related to food or mealtimes.
- Parents expressing worry that “my child just won't eat” or “we can't find what they'll take in”.

How You Can Help

Offer Flexibility

Allow substitutions when possible (e.g., smooth vs. chunky, preferred brands).

Provide Storage & Prep Options

Keep some shelf-stable purees, drinkable nutrition, or baby/transition foods on hand.

Connect Families to Support

Refer families to local feeding therapy programs and to Feeding Matters for personalized guidance.

Partner with Feeding Matters

Feeding Matters is a national nonprofit leading efforts to support families and professionals navigating pediatric feeding disorders. We offer:

- Free family resources and live support through feedingmatters.org/find-support
- Peer-to-peer mentorships through the Power of Two Program
- Professional education and system collaboration tools

If your organization serves families with unique feeding needs, we'd love to connect.

✉ info@feedingmatters.org

🌐 feedingmatters.org

📍 Based in Arizona, supporting families worldwide



Together, we can make sure every child has access to food that nourishes them — in whatever form they need.

IT'S NOT PICKY EATING

An initiative of  **feeding matters**