

Nutrition & Food Safety Policy

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services are required by legislation to ensure the provision of healthy foods and drinks that meet the requirements for children according to the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

It is essential that our Service partners with families to provide education about nutrition, and to promote healthy eating habits for young children to positively influence their health and wellbeing. Dietary and healthy eating habits formed in the early years are shown to continue into adulthood and can reduce the risk factors associated with adult chronic conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
78	Food and beverages
79	Service providing food and beverages
80	Weekly menu
90	Medical conditions policy
91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

Early Years Learning Framework

Learning Outcome 3	
3.2	Children take increasingly responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.

RELATED POLICIES

Bottled Breast Milk Policy
Sterilising Bottles & Teats Policy
Infant Bottle Safety & Preparation Policy
Multicultural Policy

PURPOSE

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) Services are required by legislation to ensure the provision of healthy foods and drinks that meet the requirements for children according to the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. It is essential that our Service partners with families to provide education about nutrition, and promote healthy eating habits for young children to positively influence their health and wellbeing. Dietary and healthy eating habits formed in the early years are shown to continue into adulthood and can reduce the risk factors associated with adult chronic conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Our Service recognises the importance of healthy eating for the growth, development and wellbeing of young children and is committed to promoting and supporting healthy food and drink choices for children in our care. This policy affirms our position on the provision of healthy food and drink while children are in our care and the promotion and education of healthy choices for optimum nutrition.

We believe in providing a positive eating environment that reflects dietary requirements, cultural and family values, and promotes lifelong learning for children. We commit to implementing and embedding into our curriculum, the healthy eating key messages as outlined by the **Victorian Healthy Eating Advisory Service** and the **NSW Health Munch & Move program** and to support the **National Healthy Eating Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings** as outlined in **Get Up & Grow** resources.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, Educators, staff, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service has a responsibility to help children to develop good food practices and approaches, by working with families and Educators.

All food prepared by the Service will endeavour to be consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and provide children with 50% of the recommended dietary intake for all nutrients. Food will be served at various times throughout the day to cater for all children's nutritional needs.

Meal times reflect a relaxed and pleasant environment where Educators engage in meaningful conversations with children. When possible, Educators will role model healthy eating behaviour, by sharing a small amount of the food on offer with the children. This assists in creating a positive and enjoyable eating environment.

Food will be prepared in accordance with the Food Safety Program. All kitchens and food preparation areas shall comply with Food Standards Australia and New Zealand. (FSANZ)

To encourage and support breastfeeding and the appropriate introduction of solid foods, our Service will:

- Provide a suitable place within the Service where Mothers can breastfeed infant children or express breast milk.
- Support Mothers to continue breastfeeding infant children until they are at least 12 months of age, whilst offering appropriate complementary foods from around 6 months of age.
- Ensure the safe handling of breast milk and infant formula including transporting, storing, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle feeding.
- In consultation with families, offer cooled pre-boiled water as an additional drink from around 6 months of age.
- Where breastfeeding is discontinued before 12 months of age, breast milk should be substituted with a commercial infant formula.
- Always bottle-feed infants by holding them in a semi-upright position.
- Ensure appropriate foods (type and texture) are introduced at around 6 months of age.
- Adjust the texture of foods offered between 6 and 12 months of age to match the developmental stage of the child.
- Offer a variety of foods to infant children from each of the food groups.
- Always supervise infant children whilst they are drinking and eating - ensuring safe bottle-feeding and eating practices at all times.

To promote healthy food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents, our Service will:

- Provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods for meals and snacks including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products, lean meats and alternatives.
- Plan and display the Service menu (at least two weeks at a time) that is based on sound menu planning principles and meets the daily nutritional needs of children whilst in care.
- Plan healthy snacks on the menu to complement what is served at mealtimes and ensure the snacks are substantial enough to meet the energy and nutrient needs of children.
- Vary the meals and snacks on the menu to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas.

The Approved Provider / Nominated Supervisor / Educators will ensure:

- Fresh drinking water is readily available for children throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- They are aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special diets and consult with families to develop individual management plans.
- Young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking.
- All children remain seated whilst eating and drinking.
- Children are always supervised while eating and drinking.
- Opportunities are provided for cooking staff and Educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition.

- Educators will follow the guidelines for serving different types of food and the serving sizes in the Guidelines and may use the Australian Government “eat for health” calculator <http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eat-health-calculators>.
- The weekly menu is displayed in an accessible and prominent area for families to view.
- Nutritional information is displayed for families and updated regularly.
- The weekly menu is accurate and describes the food and beverages provided each day.
- Food is presented attractively.
- Infant children are fed individually by Educators.
- Age and developmentally appropriate utensils, furniture and equipment will be provided for each child.
- Food is not used as a form of punishment or as a reward or bribe.
- Children are not force fed, required to eat food they do not like, or required to eat more food than they want to eat.
- Toddlers are encouraged to be independent and to develop social skills at meal times.
- Healthy eating habits are established in the children by incorporating nutritional information into the program.
- Discussions take place with families about their child’s food intake and any concerns are raised about their child’s eating.
- Parents are encouraged, to the best of our ability, to continue our healthy eating message in their homes.
- Refrigerator and freezer temperatures are taken daily, in compliance with the National Food Authority.

In relation to storing, preparing and serving food in a hygienic manner and promoting hygienic food practices, our Service will ensure:

- Gloves (or food tongs) are used by all staff handling ‘ready to eat’ foods.
- Children, Educators, staff, students, volunteers and visitors wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and single use or disposable paper towel) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.
- Food is stored and served at safe temperatures i.e. below 5°C or above 60°C.
- Separate colour coded cutting boards are used for raw meat and chicken, fruit and vegetables, and utensils and hands are washed before touching other foods.
- Children are discouraged from handling other children’s food and utensils.
- Food-handling staff members attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information on to other Educators and staff.

To create a positive learning environment, our Service will ensure:

- Educators sit with children at meal and snack times to role model healthy food and drink choices and actively engage children in conversations about the food and drink provided.
- They endeavour to recognise, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- A relaxed atmosphere is created at mealtimes where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food as well as enjoying the social interactions with Educators and other children.
- Older toddlers and preschoolers are encouraged to assist to set and clear tables and serve their own food and drink - providing opportunities for them to develop independence and self-esteem.
- Each child's appetite is respected. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, we do not insist he/she eats.
- We are patient with messy or slow eaters.
- Children are encouraged to try different foods but not forced to eat them.
- Food is not used as a reward or withheld from children for disciplinary purposes.

With regard to our Service program, our Service will:

- Foster awareness and understanding of healthy food and drink choices through including in the children's program a range of learning experiences which encourage children's healthy eating.
- Encourage children to participate in a variety of 'hands-on' food preparation experiences.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in discovery learning and discussion about healthy food and drink choices.
- Embed the importance of healthy eating and physical activity in everyday activities and experiences.

In relation to communicating with families, our Service will:

- Provide a copy of the Nutrition & Food Safety Policy to all families.
- Provide families with the opportunity to contribute to the review and development of the Nutrition & Food Safety Policy.
- Request that details of any food allergies or intolerances or specific dietary requirements be provided to the Service and work in partnership with families to develop an appropriate response so that children's individual dietary needs are met.
- Communicate regularly with families about food and nutrition related experiences within the Service and provide up to date information to assist families to provide healthy food choices at home.
- Communicate regularly with families and provide information and advice on appropriate foods and drinks to be included in children's lunchboxes. This information may be provided to families in a variety of ways including factsheets, newsletters, during orientation, information sessions and informal discussions.

Sources

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (2014).
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2015.
- Guide to the National Quality Standard.
- Early Years Learning Framework.
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand.
- Safe Food Australia, 2nd Edition. January 2001.
- Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood.
- Infant Feeding Guidelines 2012.

- Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013.
- Eat for health: Dept. Health and Ageing and NHMRC.
- Food Safety Standards for Australia 2001.
- Food Standards Australia and New Zealand Act 1991.
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand Regulations 1994.
- Food Act 2003.
- Food Regulation 2004.
- NSW Food Authority.
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011.
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011.
- Dental Association Australia.
- Australian Breast Feeding Association Guidelines.
- NSW Munch and Move.
- Victorian Healthy Eating Advisory Service.
- Revised National Quality Standard.

Review

Policy Reviewed	Modifications	Next Review Date
May 2017	Further research has been conducted, updating the rationale and terminology throughout the policy. Have incorporated embedding healthy eating and physical activity in the daily program.	May 2018
October 2017	Updated references to comply with the Revised National Quality Standard.	May 2018
May 2018	Minor grammatical changes made to content.	May 2019