

Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Policy January 2018

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 ECEC services partner 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.

Service Commitment

Montessori Works 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.

Our service is committed to implementing and embedding the healthy eating key messages outlined in the NSW Health's Munch & Move program into our curriculum and to support the National Healthy Eating Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings outlined in the Get Up & Grow resources.

Further, <<Service Name>> recognises the importance of supporting families in providing healthy food and drink to their children. It is acknowledged that the ECEC service has an important role in encouraging, supporting and educating families in healthy eating.

Strategies

Encourage and support breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods

- Abide by the current national Infant Feeding Guidelines.
- Offer a variety of nutritious foods to infants from all of the food groups in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines.
- Always supervise infants closely while drinking and eating.
- Ensure appropriate foods (type and texture) are introduced around six months of age including iron rich nutritious foods as infant's first foods.
- Adjust the texture of foods offered between six and 12 months of age to match the infant's developmental stage.
- Remain in-line with our service breastfeeding policy (procedure):
 - Provide a suitable place within the service where mothers can breastfeed their infants or express breastmilk.
 - Support mothers to continue breastfeeding until infants are at least 12 months of age while offering appropriate complementary foods from around six months of age.
 - Ensure the safe handling of breastmilk and infant formula including transporting, storing, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle feeding.
 - In consultation with families, offering cooled pre-boiled water as an additional drink from around six months of age.
 - Where breastfeeding is discontinued before 12 months of age, supporting the transition to infant formula.
 - Always bottle feed infants by holding the infant in a semi-upright position.

Promote healthy food and drinks based on the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating*

Where food is provided:

- 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 (i.e. caring for Children 'Nutrition Checklist for Menu Planning').
- 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 options.

Where food is brought from home:

- Provide information to families on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children and suitable for children's lunchboxes (i.e. caring for Children 'Lunchbox Checklist for Food Brought from Home for 2 to 5 year olds').
- Encourage children to eat the more nutritious foods provided in their lunchbox, such as sandwiches, vegetables, fruit, cheese and yoghurt, before eating any less nutritious food provided.
- Discourage the provision of highly processed snack foods high in fat, salt and sugar and low in essential nutrients in children's lunchboxes. Examples of these foods include lollies, chocolates, sweet biscuits, muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, chips, high fat savoury crackers.

All services:

- Ensure water is readily available (both indoors and outdoors) for children to consume throughout the day.
- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special dietary requirements and consult with families to develop individual management plans.
- Ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking.
- Ensure all children remain seated while eating and drinking.
- Always supervise children while eating and drinking.
- Promote good oral health through learning experiences and daily 'swish and swallow' practice.
- Ensure any fundraising promotes healthy or active lifestyles and advocates for children's wellbeing.

Provide age appropriate food and drinks to children that have been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner to promote hygienic food practices

- Ensure tongs are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- Children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and single use or disposable towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.
- Food is stored and served at safe temperatures i.e. below 5oC or above 60oC.
- Use separate cutting boards for raw meat; utensils and hands are washed before touching other foods.
- Children are discouraged from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Ensure staff handling food attend relevant training courses and share knowledge with all educators.

Provide a positive eating environment that is relaxed, social and reflects cultural and family values

- Ensure that educators sit with the 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.
- Recognise, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds through strong partnerships with families and community.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere 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.
- Encourage older toddlers and preschool-aged children to help set and clear the table and serve their own food and drink – providing opportunities for them to develop independence, confidence and self-esteem.
- Respect each child's appetite. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, do not insist he/she eats.
- Be patient with messy or slow eaters.
- Encourage children to try different foods but do not force them to eat.
- Never use food as a reward or withhold food from children for behaviour management purposes.

Promote lifelong learning for children, early childhood education and care staff and families about healthy food and drink choices, including trying new healthy foods

- Foster awareness and understanding of healthy food and drink choices through daily discussions, displays, and intentionally planned or spontaneous related learning experiences throughout our service curriculum.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for all educators and staff members responsible for providing food and drinks to the children to participate in regular professional development opportunities to broaden their knowledge and understanding of children's nutritional requirements.
- Provide opportunities for families to attend information sessions related to children's nutrition and wellbeing.

Encourage communication with families about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the service

- Provide a copy of the Nutrition Policy to all families upon orientation at the service.
- Involve families in the review of this policy (procedure) annually.
- 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 resolution so that children's individual dietary needs are met.
- Communicate regularly with families about food and nutrition related experiences within the service, including related professional development, 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 food 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 discussion.

Responsibilities of the Approved Provider

- Ensure the service operates in line with the Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010 and the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Allocate finances for training and food safety

- Allocate finances to ensure provision of nutritionally balanced and culturally sensitive meals as required
- Ensure that the service implements adequate health and hygiene practices and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service

Must ensure that the Nominated Supervisor of the service and any staff members and volunteers of the service implement adequate health and hygiene practices as well as safe food handling, preparing and storing of food to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for.

Must ensure that the food and beverages provided to children being educated and cared for at the service, are nutritious and adequate in quantity. They must also ensure that the food and beverages chosen meet the individual needs and dietary requirements including development and cultural, religious or health requirements of each child.

Must ensure that the weekly menu is displayed in an area that is accessible to families and that is accurate describing the food and beverages offered to the children each day.

Responsibilities of the Nominated Supervisor

- Ensure adequate health and hygiene practices and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food are implemented at the service to minimise risks to children
- Ensure children being cared for by the service have access to safe drinking water at all times and are offered food and beverages on a regular basis throughout the day
- Ensure that, where food and beverages are supplied by the service, they are: nutritious and adequate in quantity chosen with regard to the dietary requirements of individual children
- Ensure that, where food and beverages are provided by the service, a weekly menu that accurately describes the food and beverages to be provided is displayed at the premises in a location accessible to parents

Responsibilities of the Educators

- Adhere to the strategies and practices of the Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Policy
- Ensure children's individual dietary needs are adhered to
- Provide positive meal time experiences for children
- Respect the individual needs and choices of children
- Actively supervise children during meal times
- Adhere to the services Hygiene Policy

Responsibilities of the Families

- Communicate regularly with educators/staff regarding children's specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences.
- Contribute menu ideas and recipes

Related Statutory Obligations & Considerations

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/>

Children (Education and Care Service National Law Application) Act 2010 (NSW)

<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653>

Department of Education - <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/what-we-offer/regulation-and-accreditation/early-childhood-education-care>

Department of Health -

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/nhsc-guidelines~aus-guide-healthy-eating>

Early Childhood Australia - <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/parent-resources/childrens-health-nutrition/>

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) - [http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-](http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf)

[Kit/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf](http://files.acecqa.gov.au/files/National-Quality-Framework-Resources-Kit/belonging_being_and_becoming_the_early_years_learning_framework_for_australia.pdf)

Education and Care Services National Regulations (Children (Education and Care Services)

Get up & Grow Resource – Department of Health and Ageing

National Quality Framework (NQF) - <http://acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/>

Related Telephone Numbers

- Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate 1800-619-113
- NSW Health 9301-9000

Amendment History

Version	Amendment	Short Description
---------	-----------	-------------------

This policy will be updated to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements every year. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with Regulation 172 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulation*, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Date:

Version:

Last Amended By:

Next Review:

Position: