

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

National Quality Standards (NQS)	
1.1	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators
1.2	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
2.1.1	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for
2.1.3	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
6.1.2	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.3.1	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
7.1.1	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.

**Policy Statement**

This policy concerns the provision of healthy food and drink while children are in care and the promotion of normal growth and development.

The service is committed to implementing the healthy eating key messages outlined in Munch & Move and to supporting the National Healthy Eating Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings as outlined in the Get Up & Grow resources.

Further, we recognise the importance of supporting families in providing healthy food and drink to their children. It is acknowledged that the early childhood setting has an important role in supporting families in healthy eating.

**Goals / What are we going to do?**

Our service recognises the importance of healthy eating to the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting the healthy food and drink choices of children in our care.

**Strategies / How will it be done?**

*Encourage and support breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods*

The service will:

- Apply current national infant feeding recommendations.
- Provide a suitable place within the service where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express breast milk.
- Support mothers to continue breastfeeding until babies are at least 12 months of age while offering appropriate complementary foods from around 6 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, offer cold, pre-boiled water as an additional drink from around 6 months of age.
- Always bottle feed babies by holding baby in a semi-upright position.
- In consultation with families, determine appropriate foods (type and texture) are introduced around 6 months of age.
- In consultation with families, offer a variety of foods to babies from all the food groups.
- Always supervise babies while drinking and eating - ensuring safe bottle feeding and eating practices at all times.

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

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## Children and Adolescents

The service will:

Where food is provided by the service:

- 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.

Where food is brought from home:

- No peanuts, lollies or chips.
- Provide information to families on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children and suitable for children's lunchboxes.
- Encourage children to eat the more nutritious foods provided in their lunchbox, such as sandwiches, 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' sweet biscuits, muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, oven-baked crackers and corn chips.

## Promote safety

- Ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day.
- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special diets 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.

## Safe food handling

- Encourage and provide opportunities for cooking staff and educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition.
- Provide food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices
- Ensure gloves are worn or food 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 5°C or above 60°C.
- Separate cutting boards are used for raw meat and chicken and utensils and hands are washed before touching other foods.
- Children will be discouraged from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Food-handling staff attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information onto the rest of the staff.

## Provide a positive eating environment which 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.
- Endeavour to recognize, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food

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as well as enjoying the social interactions with educators and other children.

- Encourage older toddlers and preschoolers to assist to set and clear the table and serve their own food and drink – providing opportunities for them to develop independence 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.
- Do not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.

*Promote lifelong learning for children, early childhood staff and families about healthy food and drink choices*

- Foster awareness and understanding of healthy food and drink choices through including in the children's program a range of learning experiences encouraging 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.
- Follow kitchen garden template for food as often as possible.

*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. Families will be provided with opportunities to contribute to the review and development of the 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 food and drink to be included in children's lunchboxes. This information may be provided to families in a variety of ways including newsletters, during orientation, KidsXap, information sessions and informal discussion.

Roles & Responsibilities

Approved Provider

- Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services
- National Law and 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.

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.

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## Early Childhood 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 mealtime experiences for children.
- Respect the individual needs and choices of children.
- Actively supervise children during mealtimes.
- Adhere to the services Hygiene Policy.

## Families

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

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of practice gaps, the service will review this Policy every two years.

Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.

In accordance with R. 172 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled at the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilize the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

## Legislation

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 78-80
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2011

## Sources

- Achievement Program
- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) – [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au)
- Nutrition Australia – [www.nutritionaustralia.org](http://www.nutritionaustralia.org)
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand – [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au)
- Healthy eating for early childhood professionals-<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/health/Pages/healthyeating.aspx>
- ACECQA NUTRITION, FOOD AND BEVERAGES, DIETARY REQUIREMENTS POLICY GUIDELINES/<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-08/NutritionFoodBeveragesDietaryRequirementsGuidelines.pdf>
- Creating Positive Mealtimes ACECQA <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/latest-news/blog/creating-positive-mealtimes>
- Introducing new foods to children in education and care services <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/latest-news/blog/introducing-new-foods-children-education-and-care-services>
- Healthy eating in the National Quality Standard A guide for early childhood education and care services <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/regulation/HealthyEatingNQS.pdf>

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