



NUTRITION, FOOD, BEVERAGES AND DIETARY REQUIREMENTS POLICY

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

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 in the *Australian Infant Feeding Guidelines* and *Australian Dietary Guidelines* as outlined in the *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood* resources. The service will also refer to other government bodies such as the Department of Health, the National Health Medical Research Council and state/territory public health initiatives (for example: *Munch & Move* in NSW) in relation to healthy eating and menu planning 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?

At Orchard Early Learning Centre's children will be actively involved in the planting, caring and harvesting of our garden produce, to learn first-hand where their food comes. Our Service Chef's will bring this produce to life as part of our Paddock to Plate philosophy.

Each day, we provide children in our care with 5 delicious, healthy meals that are seasonally based, utilising produce from our gardens developed specifically to nurture both the body and the mind.

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 cooled 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.





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Eating and the Australian Dietary Guidelines

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:

- 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 (where possible). Examples of these foods include lollies, chocolates, sweet biscuits, muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, chips, oven-baked crackers and corn chips. The service can accommodate some processed foods based on children's sensory processing needs where applicable.

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

- The service will apply current national food safety standards and recommendations, as well as information from applicable state/territory food authorities.
- 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 ie below 5°C or above 60°C.





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- 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.
- Meals served to children with dietary requirements/restrictions and allergies/intolerances are served on distinctive plates and or labelled.

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 recognise, 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 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.
- The healthy eating message is promoted and positively reinforced amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, information nights, educator-parent meetings, the website and current information available from recognised authorities.
- Educators promote healthy eating with children by including the topic in daily routines and in other intentional teaching such as role-modelling, discussions, songs, stories, games, using different cultural meal settings, and cooking experiences.
- Meal times are relaxed, pleasant and unhurried. Educators sit and eat with the children, maintaining good personal nutrition, and talk with them on topics of interest, including, but not limited to, healthy food and nutrition.
- Developmentally appropriate and culturally appropriate eating utensils and furniture are provided for each child. Children, including toddlers, are encouraged to be independent and develop social skills at meal times.
- 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.
- Children who are hungry at other than meal times are given food.

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





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healthy food and drink choices.

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, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements 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. Details of any dietary restrictions will be kept in children's enrolment record.
- 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, information sessions and informal discussion.
- Staff are not permitted to bring food from outside the service into the classroom with children. This includes but not limited to soft drinks, energy drinks, drinks with dairy and all hot drinks. The only drink permitted on the floor in classroom is water.
- The healthy eating message is promoted and positively reinforced amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, information nights, educator-parent meetings, the website and current information available from recognised authorities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- 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.

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- 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





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- 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.
- Informed of their child's food and beverage intake via the OWNA app. Educators discuss face-to-face with parents any concerns about a child who has not eaten well.

Educators are responsible for:

- Adhere to the strategies and practices of the Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements 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 service's *Hygiene and Infection Control Policy*
- Completing, signing and dating excursion/service event authorisation forms.
- Providing written authorisation for their child to leave the service premises on routine outings.
- Reading the details of the excursion or service event provided by the service and asking for additional information if required.
- Understanding that, if they participate in an excursion or service event as a volunteer, they will be under the immediate supervision of the Responsible Person at all times.
- Educators follow parents written instructions for the serving of expressed breast milk and formula use. Including storing and heating information when storing and heating babies' bottles.
- Parents are informed of their child's food and beverage intake via the OWNA app. Educators discuss face-to-face with parents any concerns about a child who has not eaten well.

Families are responsible for:

- Communicate regularly with educators/staff regarding children's specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences.
- Contribute menu ideas and recipes.
- To provide Orchard ELC with details of their child's known food allergies at enrolment, and to inform the Service immediately any changes occur. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure this is kept up to date at all times.
- To discuss their child's food allergies, if any, with them (older children) and to ensure they understand the importance of not sharing food.
- Parents are asked not to bring any food, with the exception of formula, into the Service.
- Orchard Early Learning Centres are breast feeding friendly





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EVALUATION

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 18 months.

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 utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

RELATED LEGISLATION, GUIDELINES, STANDARDS, FRAMEWORK

- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice - Element 1.2.3: Child directed learning
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety - Element 2.1.3: Healthy lifestyle
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 5: Relationships with children - Element 5.1.2: Dignity and rights of the child
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities - Element 6.1.2: Parent views are respected
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations: Regulations 77-80, 162(e), 168(2)(a)(i)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011

SOURCES

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) – www.acecqa.gov.au
- Australian Dietary Guidelines - www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines
- Department of Health: Nutrition and Healthy Eating (includes Get Up and Grow Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood resources) - www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection
- National Health Medical Research Council - Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services - www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services
- Nutrition Australia – www.nutritionaustralia.org
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand – www.foodstandards.gov.au





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POLICY REVIEW

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.

Date(s) reviewed: June 2021 / February 2022

