

Sample Nutrition Policy (Lunchbox services)

Aim

The purpose of this policy is to ensure children are provided with appropriate and nutritious food whilst in care and that healthy eating is encouraged and supported throughout the service program and practices.

Rationale

Healthy eating in early childhood is important for healthy growth and development and can assist in preventing against childhood obesity, tooth decay, constipation and iron deficiency. Dietary habits formed in the early years are likely to continue into adulthood and the promotion of healthy eating in early childhood settings provides an important contribution to the prevention of adult chronic diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, Type II Diabetes and certain cancers.

Relevant Standards and Recommendations

National Quality Standards

Standard 2.2 Healthy Eating and Physical Activity are embedded into the program for children

Element 2.2.1 Healthy Eating is promoted and food and drinks provided by the service are nutritious and appropriate for each child

ECS National Regulations Part 4.3 Sections 78–80, 168

Australian Dietary Guidelines (and Infant Feeding Guidelines)

<http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>

Get Up and Grow Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood Directors

Handbook, Commonwealth of Australia 2009.

[http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/EA1E1000D846F0AFCA257BF0001DADB3/\\$File/HEPA%20-%20A4%20Book%20-%20Directors%20Book%20-%20LR.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/EA1E1000D846F0AFCA257BF0001DADB3/$File/HEPA%20-%20A4%20Book%20-%20Directors%20Book%20-%20LR.pdf)

Caring for Infants, NSW Ministry of Health

http://www0.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2008/caring_4_infants.html

Strategies

1. Encourage and promote healthy food and drink

The service will:

- Provide clear information to families on recommended and non-recommended food and drinks for children's lunchboxes.
- Ensure recommended and non-recommended food guidelines are consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and promote foods from the five food groups (Vegetables, breads and cereals, fruit, dairy and meat and meat alternatives) and discourage "discretionary" foods (eg lollies, chocolates, sweet biscuits, muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, chips, oven-baked crackers and corn chips).
- Monitor children's lunchboxes daily in accordance with lunchbox guidelines.
- Provide feedback to parents when non-recommended food or drinks are packed. Eg through lunchbox notes, verbal feedback at pick-up, through communication books and/ or parent newsletters.
- Promote water and plain milk as suitable drinks for consumption in care.
- Ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day.
- Offer food and drink at regular and predictable intervals.
- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special dietary needs and consult with families to determine specific food related requirements and develop individual management plans.
- Minimise the risk of choking through provision of appropriate foods and supervision.

2. Provide food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and promote hygienic food practices.

The service will:

- Ensure 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. Children's hand-washing practices are observed at all times.
- Discourage children from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Ensure food-handling staff attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information on to the rest of the staff.
- Have a comprehensive Food Safety Policy that is used to guide all aspects of safe food handling practice at the service.

3. Provide healthy learning experiences

The service will:

- 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.

4. Provide a positive eating environment which reflects cultural and family values

The service will:

- 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.
- Provide positive comments about healthy eating and trying new foods
- 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 to foster children's independence and self-esteem.
- Respect each child's appetite. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, educators do not insist he/she eats.
- Be patient with messy or slow eaters.
- Encourage children to try different / new foods but will not force them to eat.
- Not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.

5. Encourage and support breastfeeding

The service will:

- Apply current national infant feeding recommendations.
- Provide a suitable place within the service where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express breastmilk.
- 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.
- Where breastfeeding is discontinued before 12 months of age, substitute with a commercial infant formula.
- Always supervise babies while drinking and eating - ensuring safe bottle feeding and eating practices at all times.

6. Ensure all staff members have appropriate knowledge and skills in the area of healthy eating

The service will:

- Support regular Healthy Eating education for primary contact staff
- Include information on the Nutrition policy as part of staff orientation

7. Ensure communication with families regarding healthy eating and breastfeeding

The service will:

- 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.
- Ensure educators take time to discuss mealtimes with families and that families are regularly informed about the quantity and types of food their child is eating.
- Communicate regularly with families and provide information and advice on healthy eating, breastfeeding and 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.

8. Monitoring and review

The service will:

- Report on nutrition goals and achievements in the services Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) where appropriate, annual reports or management committee meetings.
- Include nutrition/ lunchboxes as a standing item on the staff meeting agenda.
- Review the Nutrition policy every (insert timeframe for review)