

Early Childhood Management Services

Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety Early Childhood Education

Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements Policy

Purpose

Foods provided will be based on the food groups recommended by the [Australian Guide to Healthy Eating](#)¹. We encourage children, families and our staff to follow this guide. We are committed to providing and encouraging food and beverages that:

- Are nutritious and adequate in quantity
- Are chosen having regard to the dietary requirements of individual children taking into account:
 - Each child’s growth and development needs; and
 - Any specific cultural, religious, dietary or health requirements.

All Educators and staff will follow safe food handling practices and hygiene practices and support children to do the same at all times. Please refer to Food Handling and Preparation Policy and Procedure.

Mealtimes will be used as social experiences and as an opportunity to develop self-help skills, sound hygiene practices and to learn about healthy food choices and healthy eating habits.

Background

ECMS understands it has a duty of care to ensure that children’s nutritional needs are met and food is prepared, stored and served safely within all education and care services.

Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play and leisure. All children have the right to develop to their full potential in an environment which provides for their health and wellbeing.

¹ The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (AGTHE) is produced by the Australian Government and is one of the best ways to show healthy eating guidelines. The AGTHE shows the different food groups and indicates how much food from each food group should be eaten

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We believe that by teaching children to eat wisely and moderately we are supporting them to invest in their future health. Studies show that the habits that children learn during their first five years will significantly affect their future health. A good nutritional program can provide a means of learning for life. Nutrition in childhood influences growth, activity, intellectual and emotional development.

The overall nutrition of children ultimately remains a parental responsibility. However, it is essential that ECMS Early Learning Centres provide adequate nutrition proportionate to the time the children spend in our care. Children in Early Learning and Care may receive 50-80 percent of the food intake whilst in our care. Our ELCs are required to ensure children are provided with at least 50 percent of the recommended daily intake of nutrients.

Appropriate strategies need to be implemented for children with special dietary needs and cultural food requirements. Children are especially prone to food borne illness because their immune systems are still developing and they cannot fight infection as well as adults can. The main causes of food borne illness are inadequate cooking; improper holding temperatures, contaminated equipment; unsafe food sources; and poor personal hygiene.

The Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 requires that approved provider/Nominated Supervisor/Centre Directors take reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm, injury and infection. In ECMS kindergartens, families are encouraged to send healthy snacks and lunches with their children.

Definitions

Healthy eating

Eating a wide variety of foods from the five food groups each day. These are:

- Fruit
- Vegetables and legumes/beans
- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese, and alternatives
- Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans.

Healthy eating also means eating in a way that is socially and culturally appropriate, having regular meals and snacks and eating food to satisfy hunger, appetite and energy needs.¹

Nutrition

The process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth.²

‘Sometimes’ foods and drink

Sometimes foods are high in fat, sugar and salt or a combination of these.³ They typically have very little nutritional value and are often processed and packaged.

*Refer Appendix 1

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Scope

This applies to all ECMS staff, children, families and volunteers and will be supported to meet this policy.

Nuts

Our early education and care services are all nut free. This means we accept no food product into the service that contains nuts. Staff are also required to adhere to this policy in relation to food that they bring from home.

Principles

ECMS:

- Is a strong advocate for a child's right to understand about their own health and wellbeing, through an emphasis on nutrition, health programs and positive role modelling and guidance
- Respects the role of Educators; their values and expectations will be considered when implementing providing information, assistance and training
- Values and nurtures the learning environments for the children and their families
- Responds to the specific needs of the children we serve; each child will be considered when planning and providing food and beverages
- Provides access to resources and opportunities for learning to Educators and staff
- Look for opportunities to share, to listen, to enjoy, to understand, to welcome and value all families and believe that mealtimes are an important part of building our community
- Ensures the commitment to nutrition is clear and shared by all and recognises that every member of the service impacts on children's health and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes healthy eating. All members of our service including Educators, staff, children, families and volunteers will be supported to meet this policy
- Educates the Educators, students and volunteers at the service about nutrition and safe food handling and the importance of ongoing professional development
- Works with local health professionals, services and other organisations to support Educators and staff to promote healthy eating initiatives
- Encourages families to liaise with the Educators and staff to ensure special dietary requirements are catered for and modified meals are prepared for the children with allergies, sensitivities, intolerances or preferences
- Endeavours to take into account the cultural and religious needs of each of the children and families attending. Culturally diverse meal times and food are

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embedded into the program, promoting awareness of the diversity of food and its meaning in different cultures

- Does not use food to influence behaviour or encourage children to do things. Food will be available most of the time the programs are running and children will be offered a variety to encourage decision-making and choice
- Endeavours to provide access to education and information to families and children around the importance of a healthy diet and the dietary needs of young children. Cooking will be part of the activities in programs for children
- Ensures water (preferably tap) is readily available both indoors and outdoors for children to drink throughout the day.
- Provides a suitable place within the service where mothers can breast feed their babies or express breast milk.

Roles and responsibilities

Area Manager	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring this policy and associated procedure are implemented in services under their remit.
Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the service operates in line with Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 in relation to provision of nutritious food and beverages and responsible food handling • Ensuring Educators and staff undertake appropriate training in food handling. (This course takes approximately one hour and provides the Educator with a certificate) • Allocating appropriate budget/resources to provide for each child's daily nutritional needs and training for food handlers • Developing a menu that meets the requirements of the AGTHE and ensuring the menu is reviewed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service and meets the criteria determined. Developing a process that identifies children with special dietary requirements to ensure that they receive meals that meet these and can be distributed safely • Developing and implementing guidelines/checklists for addressing issues/practices that do not meet required standards

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseeing and guiding staff to ensure adherence to policy.
Centre Cooks	As per Centre Director above
Educators, Volunteers	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging communication with families about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the service and discourages sometimes foods brought from home Encouraging and supporting breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods Promoting healthy food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents Providing food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices Providing a positive eating environment which reflects cultural diversity and family values Undertaking appropriate professional development specific to food handling and the health, safety and wellbeing of children they care for Ensuring regular open two-way communication with families Ensuring children are allowed to eat at their own pace Respecting the food preferences of children Monitoring provision of food to children with food allergies and follow special diets Providing appetising, colourful food; opportunities to try new foods Maintaining regular mealtimes Ensuring satisfaction of hunger of children between meals

Parents/guardians	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being aware of the Nutrition and Food Handling policy and procedures Feeling confident that their child's nutrition requirement is being assured, and that the service is a safe place
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the confidence that the service is regularly monitored and supported according to the legislation requirements • Being confident that the Educator has the relevant training and experience to ensure their child's welfare and development • Being confident that their religious and cultural beliefs and practices and lifestyle choices in relation to food are respected • Providing input and feedback about what and when their child eats.
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Related policy and procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition • Dental • Anaphylaxis and food allergies • Health and hygiene • Health and safety • Food safety • Behaviour guidance • Celebrations • Fundraising • Staff Health and Wellbeing
Relevant legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (VIC) – Section 3 (2) (a); 167 • Education and Care Services National Regulations: 77, .78, .90, .91, .168, • Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 Education and Care Services National Regulations (Current version as at 1 July 2018) • Get Up and Grow. Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2009 • Belonging, Being and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF). Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009 • Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF), for all Children from Birth to Eight Years. Department of Education and Training, 2016

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide to the National Quality Framework (Updated 2018) • Australian Dietary Guidelines. National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013 • Infant Feeding Guidelines, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2012
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Together Achievement Program: www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/researchandreports/Healthy-Together-Achievement-Program-early-childhood-education-and-care-services • Food Standards Australia / NZ www.foodstandards.gov.au • Tucker Talk Tips www.vaccho.org.au/wd/nutrition/tts/ (healthy, active Koorie kids) • Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Oct 2018)
Support documentation and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Health and Medical Research Council (2012) <i>Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services, 5th edition</i> Accessed July 2016: nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services • National Professional Support Coordinator Alliance (2012) Getting started with policies for the NQF: Policies in Practice template – Health hygiene and infection control: www.echr.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/policies-in-practice-health-hygiene-and-infection-control.pdf?sfvrsn=6 • Department of Health Victoria <i>Blue book – Guidelines for the control of infectious diseases</i> Accessed July 2016: ideas.health.vic.gov.au/bluebook.asp • Department of Health Victoria <i>Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program</i> Accessed June 13 2013 http://www.health.vic.gov.au/prevention/achieve_early_childhood.htm

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