

## Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements Policy

### Purpose

- To ensure that all food and beverages provided by ECMS are nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate.
- To encourage the development of healthy eating habits in children and staff.
- To support families in meeting their child's dietary needs and preferences.
- To establish practices that align with legislative and regulatory requirements, including allergy and anaphylaxis management, food safety, and child wellbeing.

### Scope

This policy applies to:

- The Approved Provider, persons with management or control, Centre Director, Nominated Supervisor, and persons in day-to-day charge.
- Early Childhood teachers, educators, staff, contractors, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others enrolled and participating in ECMS programs and services, including during offsite excursions and activities.
- All ECMS-operated Early Learning Centres and Kindergarten programs.

### Policy Statement

ECMS is committed to an anti-bias approach in early childhood. ECMS operates within a framework of social justice and equity - this means we celebrate family and cultural diversity and aim to be supportive, responsive, and inclusive of all children. ECMS is committed to providing nutritious food and beverages that support the health, wellbeing, and development of all children in our care, while meeting cultural, religious, medical, and individual dietary needs. We recognise that healthy eating habits established in early childhood have a lifelong impact, and that educators, staff, families, and the broader community all play a role in promoting these habits. We are committed to:

- **Children's wellbeing:** Ensuring food provided is safe, nutritious, and proportionate to the time children spend in our care.

- **Staff wellbeing:** Supporting staff to model healthy eating practices and maintain their own health and safety in relation to food.
- **Cultural safety:** Embedding culturally safe food practices that respect the diversity of our communities.
- **Safety and allergy management:** Maintaining stringent processes to support children with allergies, anaphylaxis, or intolerances.
- **Sustainability:** Promoting environmentally responsible food practices, including waste reduction and the use of reusable containers.
- **Education:** Providing opportunities for children to learn about healthy eating, food preparation and the cultural meaning of food.
- **Collaboration:** Work in partnership with families to ensure food brought from home supports children's health, cultural needs and allergy management.

This policy is guided by the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* (Cth), the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* (Cth), the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating, the Australian Dietary Guidelines, and our duty of care to both children and staff.

## Policy Principles

ECMS will:

- Advocate for children's right to understand health and wellbeing through nutrition education, programs and role modelling.
- Support educators and staff with training, resources and professional development in nutrition and safe food handling.
- Provide a positive eating environment that reflects cultural diversity, family values and promotes inclusion.
- Ensure children with allergies, intolerances or specific medical dietary needs are identified and supported through individualised strategies.
- Acknowledge and incorporate cultural and religious food preferences.
- Promote progressive meal and snack times to support children's self-regulation of hunger.
- Avoid using food as a reward or punishment.
- Ensure safe, hygienic food preparation and storage practices at all times.
- Provide children and staff with safe access to drinking water at all times.
- Support and encourage breastfeeding by providing suitable spaces for breastfeeding or expressing breast milk.
- Partner with local health services and the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) to ensure menus meet current standards.
- Commit to environmentally responsible practices, including minimising food waste and encouraging the use of reusable containers.

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## Allergy Aware Approach

ECMS services are “Allergy Aware.” Individual services may restrict certain foods to safely manage risks for children with allergies or anaphylaxis. Restrictions will be determined in consultation with families, Centre Directors and Area Managers.

## 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.

## Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be monitored by management, service leaders, educators, staff, families, and the health and wellbeing team.
- Ongoing audits will be conducted to ensure compliance with safe food handling practices at ELCs.
- Feedback from families, staff and children will inform continuous improvement.
- This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier if required by legislative or best-practice changes.

## Roles & Responsibilities

Approved Provider/ Executive Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oversee policy governance, implementation and compliance.</li><li>• Ensure organisational compliance with legislation, regulation, and this policy.</li><li>• Ensure systems are in place to implement this policy consistently across all ECMS services.</li><li>• Provide resources, training, and support to services.</li></ul>
Centre Directors/ Nominated Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure compliance with the <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</i> relating to food and nutrition.</li><li>• Ensure menus align with the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and are reviewed by HEAS.</li><li>• Ensure staff preparing food hold a Food Handlers Certificate and a nominated staff member holds a Food Safety Supervisor's Certificate.</li><li>• Identify children with special dietary requirements and ensure safe systems for meal provision.</li><li>• Implement a Food Safety Plan and ensure issues are addressed promptly.</li></ul>
Centre Cooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follow menu requirements and safe food handling practices.</li><li>• Work in partnership with educators to provide nutritious meals and snacks.</li></ul>

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Educators, Staff, Students on Placement, Volunteers and Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and model healthy eating practices.</li> <li>• Support children in developing independence, self-regulation, and safe hygiene practices at mealtimes.</li> <li>• Communicate with families regarding food brought from home and discourage “sometimes foods.”</li> <li>• Respect cultural and religious preferences around food.</li> <li>• Monitor children with allergies or dietary restrictions and follow required protocols.</li> <li>• Ensure food is served safely, hygienically and in a culturally inclusive and respectful environment.</li> </ul>
Parents/Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide healthy, safe food and beverages when requested to do so.</li> <li>• Provide nutritious food and beverages when packing food from home, in line with healthy eating guidelines and service restrictions (e.g. nut free, allergy aware).</li> <li>• Inform educators of any allergies, intolerances or dietary restrictions and update regularly.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with staff to support their child’s nutritional and cultural needs.</li> </ul>

### Related Legislation, Regulations and Resources

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Regs 77, 78, 79, 80, 90, 91, 168)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Child Safe Standards (Vic) – Standard 2: Children Safety and Wellbeing
- National Quality Standard – Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety
- [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#), National Health and Medical Research Council (2013)
- [Infant Feeding Guidelines](#), National Health and Medical Research Council (2012)
- [Get Up and Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood: Resource collection](#) – Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, 2025
- [Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia \(V2.0\)](#) – Australian Department of Education (2022).
- [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework \(VEYLDF\) for all Children from Birth to Eight Years](#) – Department of Education (Vic), 2016

### Related Policies and Procedures

- Child Health and Hygiene Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints and Feedback Policy

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- Enrolment Policy
- Excursion/Regular Outing Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Privacy and Confidential Information Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Risk Management Framework

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Version	Reason for Amendment	Approved by	Approval date
6.0	Policy reviewed, consulted and updated	ECMS Executive	September 2025

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