



'Where learning  
is fun'

## NUTRITION POLICY

### Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety

#### OBJECTIVE

Healthy Eating and Support Breastfeeding

#### Rationale

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services are required by legislation to ensure the provision of healthy foods and drinks that meet the requirements for children according to the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. It is essential that ECEC services partner with families to provide education about nutrition and promote healthy eating habits for young children to positively influence their health and wellbeing. Dietary and healthy eating habits formed in the early years are shown to continue into adulthood and can reduce the risk factors associated with adult chronic conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

#### **This policy (procedure) aims to:**

1. Encourage and support breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods.
2. Promote healthy food and drinks based on the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.
3. Provide age appropriate food and drinks to children that have been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices.
4. Provide a positive eating environment that is relaxed and social and reflects cultural and family values.
5. Promote lifelong learning for children, early childhood educators and families about healthy food and drink choices including trying new healthy foods.
6. Encourage communication with families about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the service.

#### **Our strategies to implementing this policy (procedure) include:**

- 1. Encourage and support breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods**
  - Encourage and support breastfeeding by:
    - Informing families that the service supports breastfeeding at first contact or at orientation and asking if families would like to continue offering their infant breastmilk while in care.
    - Asking families about breastfeeding at the time of enrolment.
    - Providing a suitable place within the service where mothers can breastfeed their infants or express breastmilk. This place may include an electrical outlet, comfortable chair, a change table and nearby access to hand washing facilities.

- Providing refrigerator space for breastfeeding mothers to store their expressed breastmilk.
- Supporting mothers to continue breastfeeding until infants are at least 12 months of age while offering appropriate complementary foods from around six months of age.
- Developing a documented feeding plan for breastfed infants in consultation with family members. The plan will include arrangements for what the service should do if the service does not have enough expressed breastmilk to meet the infant's needs.
- Ensuring the safe handling of breastmilk and infant formula during transportation, storage, thawing, warming, preparation and bottle feeding.
- Offering cooled pre-boiled water as an additional drink from around six months of age, in consultation with families.
- Supporting the transition to infant formula where breastfeeding is discontinued before 12 months of age.
- Always bottle feed infants by holding the infant in a semi-upright position.
- Abide by the current national *Infant Feeding Guidelines*.
- Offer a variety of nutritious foods to infants from all of the food groups in line with the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*.
- Always supervise infants closely while drinking and eating.
- Ensure appropriate foods (type and texture) are introduced around six months of age including iron rich nutritious foods as infant's first foods.
- Adjust the texture of foods offered between six and 12 months of age to match the infant's developmental stage.

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

### ***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 (i.e. *Caring for Children* 'Lunchbox Checklist for Food Brought from Home for 2 to 5 year olds').
- Encourage children to eat the more nutritious foods provided in their lunchbox, such as sandwiches, vegetables, fruit, cheese and yoghurt.
- 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 include lollies, chocolates, chocolate flavoured yogurt, sweet biscuits, muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, chips, high fat savoury crackers, 2 minute noodles, flavoured drinks and juices.

## **RESPONSIBILITY OF FAMILIES - Where lunch is brought from home**

- To protect the health and safety of children at risk of Anaphylaxis DO NOT bring into the Service any nut products, eggs and tuna e.g. peanut butter, Nutella, muesli/nut bars, etc.,.
- From time to time follow strict advice regarding food items that you MUST NOT bring into the Service to protect the health and safety of children with food allergies.
- For children aged 2 to 5 years, provide a nutritious lunch which meets the guidelines in "Caring for Children Lunchbox Checklist for Food Brought from Home for 2 to 5 year olds".
- Provide your child with a water bottle, at the end of everyday take your child's water bottle home, clean in hot water and detergent.
- Ensure your child's lunch is labelled with their full name. Some families may choose to place their child's lunch in a lunchbox, please ensure the lunchbox is clearly marked with your child's full name.
- Provide lunch items which DO NOT require re-heating, for those children who will be attending School in the following year this will be a good opportunity for children to practice eating a cold lunch. Our Educators will be on hand to assist children with opening and accessing their lunch.
- On arrival place your child's lunch in the allocated lunch storage area (sign will be placed in foyer). Our Educators will then ensure any items that need refrigeration will be placed in the fridge. In some Services families may be able to place their child's lunch in the Services fridge on arrival.

### **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 (i.e. *Caring for Children* 'Nutrition Checklist for Menu Planning').
- 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 options.

### **All services:**

- Ensure water is readily available (both indoors and outdoors) for children to consume throughout the day.

- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special dietary requirements 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.
- Promote good oral health through learning experiences and daily 'swish and swallow' practice.
- Ensure any fundraising promotes healthy or active lifestyles and advocates for children's wellbeing.

### **3. Provide age appropriate food and drinks to children that have been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner to promote hygienic food practices**

- Ensure tongs, spoons or other appropriate utensils are used by all staff and children handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- Children and staff wash and dry their hands (according the Services Hygiene Policy) 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.
- Use separate cutting boards for raw meat; utensils and hands are washed before touching other foods.
- Children are discouraged from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Ensure staff handling food attend relevant training courses and share knowledge with all educators. Sydney Services access Kids Gourmet food on-line training tutorials.

### **4. Provide a positive eating environment that is relaxed, social and 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.
- Recognise, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds through strong partnerships with families and community.
- 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 preschool-aged children to help set and clear the table and serve their own food and drink – providing opportunities for them to develop independence, confidence 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.
- Never use food as a reward or withhold food from children for behaviour management purposes.

**5. Promote lifelong learning for children, early childhood education and care staff and families about healthy food and drink choices, including trying new healthy foods**

- Foster awareness and understanding of healthy food and drink choices through daily discussions, displays, and intentionally planned or spontaneous related learning experiences throughout our service curriculum.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for all educators and staff members responsible for providing food and drinks to the children to participate in regular professional development opportunities to broaden their knowledge and understanding of children's nutritional requirements.
- Provide information to for families related to children's nutrition and wellbeing.

**6. 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.
- Involve families in the review of this policy (procedure) at least every 24 months.
- 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 resolution so that children's individual dietary needs are met.
- Communicate regularly with families about food and nutrition related experiences within the service, including related professional development, and provide up to date information to assist families to provide healthy food choices at home.

**Key Resources**

- Munch and Move Model Policy (last revised Feb 2018)
- NSW Health *Munch & Move* program resources available on the Healthy Kids website [www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au)
- *Caring for Children: Birth to 5 years (Food, Nutrition and Learning Experiences)*, NSW Ministry of Health, 2014
- *Infant Feeding Guidelines*, 2012, [www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au)
- *Australian Dietary Guidelines*, 2013, [www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au)

**Last Update – 15 April 2020**