



Policy and Procedures Dental care

PURPOSE

Acacia Children's Centres (Acacia) acknowledge the importance of oral health and its contribution to good health and overall wellbeing.

This policy provides guidelines to:

- promote a healthy lifestyle and support children, staff, educators and families at the service to maintain oral health
- ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about oral health are met
- ensure that the dietary and cultural needs of children and families are taken into consideration when implementing oral health activities.

Acacia believe that we are able to make a positive impact on children's knowledge by providing an educational platform of oral health by:

- Connecting with our community dental health program 'Smiles for Miles' (Smiles 4 Miles is an initiative of Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV) which aims to improve the oral health of children and their families in high risk areas across Victoria)
- Implementing an educational program that has clear strategies in providing opportunities for children to engage a range of educational experiences regarding oral health, nutrition and healthy habits
- Provide information about the dental program and how families can support children to have healthy dental habits from a young age
- Provide annual dental screening for children
- Create an environment that promotes healthy eating and good oral health.
- Encourage children to make healthy food and drink choices

Scope

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day-to-Day Charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, families, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Acacia Children's Centres.

Background and Legislation

Background

There are many benefits to promoting a healthy lifestyle in early childhood education and care settings, including the positive impact this has on each child's learning and development. Being made aware of positive eating behaviour, oral hygiene practices and the importance of physical activity from an early age can instil good habits that will remain throughout a person's life. Staff are well placed to build this awareness among children and their families, while respecting lifestyle choices, and cultural and religious values.

As a health promoting service it is recognised that every member of the service impacts on children's health. Children, staff, educators and families can be supported to eat healthily, maintain good oral health and be physically active through teaching and learning opportunities, policies,



creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment and developing community links and partnerships.

Oral Health

Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem despite being largely preventable. It is important to note that oral health promotion is complementary to promoting healthy eating.

Oral health behaviours have a major influence on children's health and wellbeing and a direct impact on their growth and development. Oral diseases can negatively affect individuals through pain, discomfort, general health and quality of life. Poor oral health can limit a child's capacity in biting, chewing, smiling, speaking, and psychosocial wellbeing. The main oral health condition experienced by children is tooth decay affecting over half of all Australian children, making it five times more prevalent than asthma.

A strong sense of health and wellbeing, supported by good nutrition, oral health and an active lifestyle, can provide children with confidence, energy and optimism that will contribute to their ability to concentrate, co-operate and learn (*Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, – refer to *Sources*). Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, oral health and active play, links directly to Outcome 3 in both the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to *Sources*).

The Australian Government has guidelines, recommendations and resources for healthy eating in early childhood settings including the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and *Infant Feeding Guidelines* (refer to *Sources*). Practical, healthy eating advice is also available to early childhood services and schools via a telephone advice line: the Victorian Healthy Eating Advisory Service (Healthy Eating Advisory Service – refer to *Sources*), run by Nutrition Australia. Early childhood education and care services can also register and implement the *Achievement Program* (refer to *Sources*). This program is designed to create safe, healthy and friendly environments for children, staff educators and families, by promoting physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* including Regulations 77–78, 79–80 (if the service provides food), 168
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Food Act 1984 (Vic)
- *National Quality Standard* including Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Definitions

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.



Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) supervision entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

'Discretionary' foods and drinks: Food and drink items that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and that contain minimal vitamins, minerals or fibre. These can also be referred to as 'sometimes' foods and drinks.

Healthy eating: Describes eating patterns that provide all the recommended nutrients for growth and development, and good health and wellbeing, now and in the future. It also refers to preparing, serving and eating food in a way that recognises its importance as a social and cultural activity.

Nutrition: The process of providing or receiving nourishing substances.

Oral health: The absence of active disease in the mouth. Oral health is fundamental to overall health, wellbeing and quality of life. A healthy mouth enables people to eat, speak and socialise without pain, discomfort or embarrassment.

Sources

- *Australian Dietary Guidelines* 2019, National Health and Medical Research Council: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>
- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:* <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia>
- Better Health Channel: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Dental Health Services Victoria: www.dhsv.org.au
- Food Safety Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand: www.foodstandards.gov.au
- *The Achievement Program* is a health and wellbeing initiative for early childhood services, schools and workplaces: www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au
- Healthy Eating Advisory Service: www.heas.health.vic.gov.au



- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Infant Feeding Guidelines: information for health workers* (2013): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/infant-feeding-guidelines-information-health-workers>
- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (5th edition, 2013): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services>
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*: www.education.vic.gov.au

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider and Persons with Management or Control are responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for oral health (refer to *Definitions*)
- providing ongoing information, resources and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including oral health, for young children (refer to *Sources*)
- recognising families, educators and staff as role models and encouraging them to bring/use foods and drinks that are in line with the service's Nutrition and Dental Care policies.
- ensuring educators are supported to access a range of resources to increase their capacity to promote oral health initiatives for children

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day-to-Day Charge are responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to learn about and make healthy choices for oral health
- embedding opportunities to learn about healthy eating and oral health in the educational program, throughout the year
- ensuring oral hygiene practices are undertaken at the service where appropriate
- ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times (Regulation 78(1)(a)). (Only tap water and plain milk are encouraged.)
- registering and engaging the service with the *Achievement Program* (refer to *Sources*)
- ensuring that cultural and religious practices/requirements of families are accommodated to support children's learning and development
- providing families with information and strategies to promote oral health and how to access relevant services (including local dental clinics)
- developing links with local and regional health services, community organisations and businesses that provide expertise, resources, and support for oral health
- ensuring educators are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote oral health
- Ensuring Oral Health information and policy requirements are included in educator/ staff induction or orientation.
- Ensuring that best practices are followed in relation to bottle feeding and sipper cups as outlined in the NHMRC infant Guidelines.



All educators/staff are responsible for:

- complying with the service's *Dental Care Policy*
- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for oral health
- ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times (Regulation 78(1)(a)). (Only tap water and plain milk are encouraged.)
- ensuring that cultural and religious practices/requirements of families are accommodated to support children's learning and development
- discussing healthy eating and oral health choices with children and introducing the concept of 'sometimes' and everyday foods and drinks
- supporting students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service
- keeping parents/guardians informed of current information relating to oral health
- providing opportunities for children to learn about, and develop skills for oral health through the educational program, including age-appropriate tooth brushing
- providing adequate supervision (refer to *Definitions*) for all children at all times

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- complying with the requirements of this policy
- encouraging their child/ren to drink an adequate amount of water (preferably tap water), and discouraging 'discretionary' drinks
- providing healthy, nutritious food for snacks/meals, including fruits and vegetables in line with the service's *Dental Care* policy, where applicable

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from educators, staff, parents/guardians, children, management and all affected by the policy
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required with all members of the service

BREACH OF THIS POLICY

Any educator or staff found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

Version: 6	Endorsed By: CoM	Approved Date: 2008	Reviewed Date: August 2022
-------------------	-------------------------	----------------------------	-----------------------------------