



Policy and Procedures Nutrition

Purpose

Acacia Children's Centres (Acacia) acknowledge the importance of healthy eating 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 eat nutritious food
- ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about nutrition are met
- ensure that the dietary and cultural needs of children and families are taken into consideration when planning menus and implementing nutrition and healthy eating activities
- ensure the safe storage and preparation of food.

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.

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 from an early age can instill 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 through teaching and learning opportunities, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment and developing community links and partnerships.

Nutrition

The foods we eat provide our body with the nutrients we need to stay healthy. Good nutrition is the balanced eating of a variety of foods and is especially important for children as they require a large amount of nutrients for growth and development. Research has shown that, when offered a variety of healthy foods, children can and do make good choices. It is also important to provide preschool children with a good foundation in healthy eating, as most children have formed lifelong eating habits before they reach school age.

A strong sense of health and wellbeing, supported by good nutrition 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 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*, the *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood* resources and the *National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 Years* (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.

'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.

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
- Department of Health (2013) *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood:* <https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-gug-staffcarers>
- *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>



- Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years): <https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/npra-0-5yrs-brochure>
- 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 eating (refer to *Definitions*)
- providing ongoing information, resources, and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including healthy eating and nutrition (refer to *Sources*)
- ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 77)
- ensuring measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of the dietary needs of all children
- ensuring that fresh drinking water is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including meal times (Regulation 78(1)(a)) (Only tap water and plain milk are encouraged.)
- ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b))
- ensuring educators are supported to access a range of resources to increase their capacity to promote healthy eating for children
- ensuring there is a suitable space for breastfeeding and storage of breast milk is available
- Ensuring Healthy Eating information and policy requirements are included in educator/ staff induction or orientation.

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 eating
- ensuring healthy food and drinks are promoted, and discretionary/ sometimes foods and drinks are discouraged
- embedding opportunities to learn about healthy eating and oral health and the importance of physical activity in the educational program, throughout the year
- ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 77)
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment or on initial diagnosis
- ensuring measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of the dietary needs of all children



- ensuring that fresh drinking water is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including meal-times (Regulation 78(1)(a)). (Only tap water and plain milk are encouraged).
- ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b))
- registering and engaging the service with the *Achievement Program* (refer to *Sources*)
- providing families with information and strategies to promote healthy eating and how to access relevant services
- developing links with local and regional health services, community organisations and businesses that provide expertise, resources, and support for healthy eating
- ensuring educators are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote healthy eating
- supporting students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service
- Ensuring when food is provided to staff and educators for meetings, events and celebrations, healthy food options are included, and discretionary/ sometimes options are discouraged.
- Ensuring celebrations, fundraising and events promote healthy food options and discourage discretionary/ sometimes food options.

Where food is provided at the service:

- ensuring the provision of nutritionally-balanced and culturally-sensitive meals, in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, as required
- ensuring that staff who are responsible for menu planning participate in regular nutrition and safe food handling training, and are kept up to date with current research, knowledge and best practice
- ensuring that food and drink provided by the service is nutritious, varied, adequate in quantity and appropriate to children's growth and development, and meets any specific cultural, religious or health needs (Regulation 79(1))
- ensuring the service menu has been assessed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service's FoodChecker tool and meets the criteria determined
- ensuring that a weekly menu is displayed in a location accessible to parents/guardians, and that it accurately describes the food and drinks to be provided by the service each day (Regulation 80(1)).

All educators/staff are responsible for:

- complying with the service's *Nutrition Policy* and with the *Food Safety Act*
- being aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment at the service or on initial diagnosis
- implementing measures to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies
- being aware of the dietary needs of all children
- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating
- discussing healthy eating choices with children and introducing the concept of 'sometimes' and everyday foods and drinks
- providing a variety of cooking and food experiences that support children to develop food literacy and positive habits relating to food
- ensuring that food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe, or reward at any time
- keeping parents/guardians informed of current information relating to healthy eating



- ensuring that fresh drinking water is readily available at all times indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink regularly throughout the day, including meal times
- providing a positive eating environment and sitting and interacting with children at meal times
- encouraging children to be independent at meal times e.g. self-feeding and using utensils in a culturally-sensitive way
- providing adequate supervision for all children at all times, including at meal times

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- providing details of specific nutritional/dietary requirements, including the need to accommodate cultural or religious practices or food allergies, on their child's enrolment form, and discussing these with the Nominated Supervisor prior to the child's commencement at the service, and if requirements change over time
- communicating regularly with educators/staff regarding children's specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences
- encouraging their child/ren to drink an adequate amount of water (preferably tap water), and discouraging 'discretionary' drinks

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

Menu Planning

When planning menus we ensure that they are nutritionally balanced and that all food groups set in The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating are included.

The food groups consist of:

- Breads and Cereals
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Dairy and Alternatives
- Meat and Alternatives

When looking at what to offer on our menus we adhere to the Guidelines for Infant feeding, Healthy Eating Advisory Service, Department of Health, State Government of Victoria, 2012

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.