

## FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY

**Quality Areas:** NQS 1 – Educational program and practice, NQS 2 – Children’s Health and Safety, NQS 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities

**Policy Owner:** Safety and Compliance

A light blue speech bubble with a white outline, containing the text 'Why this is important' in a dark blue, handwritten-style font.

Why this is important

### 1.0 Introduction and Purpose

We recognise that healthy eating supports the growth, development, and wellbeing of children. Our centre promotes and provides nutritious food and drinks in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, while respecting children’s dietary needs, cultural backgrounds, and family values.

We partner with families to support menu planning, nutrition education, and the development of lifelong healthy eating habits. The safety, wellbeing, and rights of children are paramount, and all food is handled according to state-based food safety requirements, with each centre maintaining a Food Safety Plan, completing required checks, and participating in audits as necessary.

### 2.0 Who does this policy apply to:

This policy applies to all children, families, employees, volunteers, contractors, and visitors who are involved in food provision, handling, or mealtime routines within our centres.

### 3.0 What is our Policy:

Our centres are committed to providing nutritious, appealing, and culturally inclusive meals and snacks that meet the needs of all children. We aim to promote positive attitudes toward food and to ensure that all food is handled and prepared safely and hygienically.

Menus are developed in line with the *Australian Guide to Healthy Eating* and the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents*. The food provided reflects balance, variety, and moderation, and we make every effort to use fresh, seasonal ingredients, which are generally more nutritious and economical than processed alternatives.

We are committed to managing medical conditions, allergies, and dietary preferences with sensitivity and care. Weekly menus will be displayed for families, and updates will be provided regularly to promote transparency and awareness of healthy eating practices.

#### 3.1 Menu Planning and Food Provision

Menus include a variety of foods from all five food groups. Water is the main drink provided throughout the day, and milk is offered as appropriate for each child’s age and needs. Menus are designed to reflect the cultural and dietary diversity of our families, and feedback from families is welcomed as part of our menu planning process. Menus are reviewed seasonally to ensure variety and freshness, and records of each day’s menu are retained for a minimum of four weeks. All food served is of good quality and, wherever possible, free from unnecessary additives and artificial colours.

#### 3.2 Mealtime Practices

Mealtimes are an important part of the learning program and provide opportunities for conversation, skill development, and social connection. Educators sit with children to model healthy eating habits and positive social behaviour. They encourage children to try new foods but will never force them to eat. Children are supported to develop independence and self-help skills by serving themselves when developmentally ready.

Children will be seated while eating, and mealtimes will be calm, unhurried, and respectful. Educators will respect each child's appetite and acknowledge that their eating habits and hunger levels vary from day to day. Food is never used as a reward, punishment, or play resource.

Infants are fed individually by educators using age-appropriate utensils and furniture. Feeding times are flexible and responsive to each child's cues. Educators show patience and understanding with messy or slow eaters, recognising that exploring food is part of learning. Infants and young children are always supervised while eating or drinking to ensure safety.

### **3.3 Safe Food Choices and Choking Prevention with Young Children**

Certain foods present a higher choking risk for young children, and special care is taken when preparing and serving these items. Hard fruits and vegetables such as apples, carrots, and celery are grated, cooked, or mashed before serving. Foods such as nuts, seeds, popcorn, tough meats, sausages with skin, and hard lollies or corn chips are not provided to children under five. Educators supervise all children closely during meals and snacks to ensure their safety.

Drinking water is available to children at all times, both indoors and outdoors. Educators encourage children to drink water regularly, particularly after meals and active play. Children's food and fluid intake are monitored and communicated to families as needed to ensure continuity of care between home and the service.

### **3.4 Breastfeeding and Infant Formula**

We support breastfeeding mothers and provide a private, comfortable, and welcoming space for breastfeeding or expressing milk. We recognise that breastfeeding for at least 12 months is recommended whilst gradually introducing appropriate complementary foods from around six months of age.

Breast milk and infant formula are handled, stored, and prepared safely according to approved procedures. This includes safe transportation, storage at the correct temperature, careful thawing and warming, and hygienic preparation and feeding practices. Babies are always supervised while feeding, and bottles are never propped or left unattended. Educators respect each family's feeding choices and work in partnership with families to support each child's feeding routine.

### **3.5 Food Safety**

The health, safety and wellbeing of children is a priority, and safe food handling is an essential part of providing a safe learning environment. Each centre must meet all state and territory food safety laws and regulations that apply to early childhood education and care services. This includes following relevant food safety standards, local council requirements, and public health directions to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

Every centre is required to have a current Food Safety Plan that reflects how food is safely received, stored, prepared, served and cleaned up. Team members must complete all required food safety checks, including temperature monitoring, cleaning schedules and record keeping, in line with the Food Safety Plan. Food safety audits and inspections are conducted as required by regulatory authorities and the organisation to ensure ongoing compliance, identify risks, and support continuous improvement in food safety practices.

### **3.6 Food Safety Training**

Each centre must have a qualified Food Safety Supervisor who renews their certification every three years. If no other full-time team member holds this qualification, the Centre Manager must complete the training. All educators are required to undertake Food Handling training at least every five years to ensure they understand and apply safe food handling, allergy management, and hygiene practices. Training also includes awareness of cross-contamination prevention and emergency responses for allergic reactions and anaphylaxis. Information in relation to food safety is available on the Guardian Way.

### **3.7 Food Hygiene and Safety Standards**

Children and team members will follow strict health and hygiene practices to ensure food is handled, prepared, and served safely. This includes appropriate handwashing before and after handling food or eating meals, using soap and warm running water, and drying hands with single-use paper towels.

Educators and food handlers will use gloves or tongs when managing ready-to-eat foods and will ensure that children do not handle food or utensils belonging to others. All food preparation areas and practices must comply with *Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ)*, local council food licensing requirements, the *Building Code of Australia*, and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*.

Each centre must maintain an approved Food Safety Program outlining procedures for the safe purchase, storage, preparation, cooking, cooling, and serving of food. Food must always be prepared and served in a clean, hygienic manner, with hot food cooled and served at safe temperatures between 50°C and 60°C.

Where food allergies, preferences or intolerances exist, clear labelling including a current picture of the child (preferably that matched their MMP, their full name and the reason for the alternative meal i.e. gluten free will be implemented. These meals will be served separately in accordance with the centre's *Medical Conditions Policy*.

### 3.8 Communication with Families

Families are encouraged to participate in our healthy eating approach by sharing information about their child's dietary needs, cultural requirements, and food preferences. Centres will regularly update families about menu changes, nutrition initiatives, and food safety practices. We will also provide families with information and resources that promote healthy eating at home to ensure a consistent approach between the service and the family environment.

## 4.0 Responsibilities

### 4.1 The Approved Provider will:

1. Allocate finances for food safety training and the provision of nutritionally balanced meals
2. Ensure advice and policy are provided to guide the provision of adequate health and hygiene practices, including safe premises, equipment and practices for handling, preparing and storing food, in line with Australian Food Safety Standards and any jurisdictional requirements
3. Ensure that child enrolment sets out the requirement to collect information about each child's specific dietary needs such cultural or religious food preferences, as well as any health-related dietary requirements for medical conditions
4. Ensure that centre design guidelines set out the provision for food preparation areas i.e. kitchens and food preparation spaces including the provision of commercial equipment, where appropriate to maintain a commercial food licence
5. Provide guidance in regards to food safety training that meet food safety standards

### 4.2 The Centre Manager / Nominated Supervisor (NS) will:

1. Request details of any child's food allergy, intolerance or food preference and ensure that this is detailed on the child's enrolment form and specific details in their enrolment file. Work with the family to develop appropriate processes so that individual children's needs are met
2. Ensure they and their team have completed all required Food and Nutrition training and that they or their Cook/Chef hold a current Food Safety Supervisor Certificate
3. Ensure health and hygiene practices are followed as outlined in your Food Safety Plan and related procedures, as well as safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food
4. Ensure children have access to safe drinking water at all times and are offered food and drinks appropriate to each child's needs on a regular basis throughout the day
5. Ensure the food and drink provided are nutritious and adequate in quantity, and chosen based on each child's dietary requirements
6. Ensure your Food License / Certificate from your local council is displayed (if applicable) outside of your kitchen as per the *Information for Display*
7. Display and make accessible to family members a weekly menu which accurately describes the food and drink to be provided by the centre each day. Teams may choose to display this on Story Park in addition to it being displayed in a prominent area for families. e.g. the meals area or outside the kitchen
8. Work with families to develop risk minimisation plans and ensure educators and staff implement these plans for children with medical conditions that can be impacted by food as per the *Medical Conditions Policy*

9. Ensure a BeSafe incident report is logged if an incident occurs and in accordance with our *Incident Management Policy* e.g. allergic reaction, food safety issue, foreign object in food, injury e.g. burn occurs for a child or team member
10. Ensure that a system for ongoing communication is developed and maintained between families, team members and chef/cook, so that all are aware of children's nutrition and any special dietary requirements or medical conditions
11. Develop program planning that promotes healthy eating and knowledge of nutrition by children and families, and involve children in decision-making about healthy food and drink choices
12. Ensure adequate time is provided for the cook/chef to undertake all tasks, including cleaning and maintaining the kitchen to meet food licencing requirements
13. Communicate regularly with families about food and nutrition related experiences within the centre and provide up to date information to assist families to provide healthy food choices at home.

#### **4.3 Team Members will:**

1. Handle, prepare and store food using safe practices, in line with Australian Food Safety Standards and any jurisdictional requirements
2. Ensure procedures are in place to prevent children being provided the wrong food or breast milk
3. Ensure children have access to safe drinking water at all times and are offered food and drinks appropriate to each child's needs on a regular basis throughout the day
4. Monitor children's food and drink intake to ensure it is adequate and appropriate to each child's needs and complete the appropriate Daily Chart
5. Ensure volunteers and students do not prepare and serve food
6. Document children's food intake after each mealtime and ensure this is communicated with families every day at pick up time. Team members may communicate this verbally to families, ensure it is visible by placing it in a prominent location in their room for families and on Story park
7. Be familiar with the individual needs and action plans for the children and team members with allergies or medical conditions impacted by food
8. Maintain ongoing communication with families and other team members (including the Nominated Supervisor) about any changes to children's dietary requirements and ensure these changes are reflected by completing the relevant documents outlined in our *Medical Conditions Policy*
9. Implement and reflect on program planning to promote healthy eating and knowledge of nutrition by children, e.g. eating with the children, conversations during mealtimes around food
10. Promote healthy eating among families
11. Involve children in decision-making about healthy food and drink choices
12. Complete all required training as prescribed

#### **4.4 The Cook / Chef will:**

1. Plan the menu to ensure food and drink are nutritious, adequate in quantity, and based on each child's dietary requirements
2. Complete all checks, logs and records as required in the Food Safety Plan
3. Ensure that all foods are handled, stored and prepared in accordance with the Food Safety Plan
4. Follow all requirements related to individual child's medical conditions by establishing strong effective communication with all team members
5. Stay updated about children's individual dietary needs
6. Update the menu in accordance with seasonal foods, preferences of children and community expectations, as appropriate
7. Ensure that any changes to daily menu are communicated to the Nominated Supervisor and are communicated to the team and family on that day
8. Ensure that all food safety cleaning requirements are undertaken
9. Complete all required training

#### **4.5 Families will:**

1. Ensure the centre is advised of their child's dietary requirements – relating to their child's growth and development needs, as well as any preferences or health requirements at the time of enrolment, and that this information is kept up to date
2. Provide requested medical information (e.g. Medical Management Plan, ASCIA Allergy / Anaphylactic Action Plan, Doctors letter advising of a food intolerance) should their children have a medical condition that can be impacted by food in accordance with the *Medical Conditions Policy*. This includes working with the centre to develop a Risk Minimisation and Communication plan
3. Provide clearly labelled, in date medication specified in a medical management/ action plan before the child can remain at the centre
4. Review the centres weekly menu and provide any feedback

## 5.0 Definitions

A **Food Safety Plan** is a documented system that outlines how a centre safely handles, prepares, stores and serves food to minimise food safety risks and prevent foodborne illness, in line with state and territory food safety requirements.

## 6.0 Tools and Resources

The most important documents I need are:	Other supporting documents will include:
Food Safe Plan/Program	<a href="#">Eat for health calculators</a>
Medical Conditions Policy	<a href="#">Australian and New Zealand Food Standards</a>
Get up & Grow: Healthy eating and physical activity for early childhood	<a href="#">Food Safety and Nutrition</a> Guardian Way page
Food Preferences Form	<a href="#">Medical Conditions</a> Guardian Way page
Medical Conditions Summary Sheet	<a href="#">Hand washing poster</a>
Preference Sheet	
Daily Charts	

## 7.0 Sources

[Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services](#)

[Nutrition Australia](#)

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2018

Guide to the National Quality Framework 2018

[www.nutritionaustralia.org](http://www.nutritionaustralia.org)

[Infant feeding Guidelines](#)

[ASCIA Guidelines – Infant Feeding and Allergy Prevention](#)

Regulation 77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
Regulation 78	Food and beverages
Regulation 79	Service providing food and beverages
Regulation 80	Weekly menu
Regulation 90	Medical conditions policy
Regulation 168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures



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