

Early Childhood Management Services

Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety Early Childhood Education

Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements Policy

Purpose

Foods provided will be based on the food groups recommended by the [Australian Guide to Healthy Eating \(AGTHE\)](#)¹. We encourage children, families and our staff to follow this guide. We are committed to providing and encouraging food and beverages that:

- Are nutritious and adequate in quantity
- Are chosen having regard to the dietary requirements of individual children taking into account:
 - Each child’s growth and development needs; and
 - Any specific cultural, religious, dietary or health requirements.

All Educators and staff will follow safe food handling practices and hygiene practices and support children to do the same at all times.

Mealtimes will be used as social experiences and as an opportunity to develop self-help skills, sound hygiene practices and to learn about healthy food choices and healthy eating habits.

Background

ECMS understands it has a duty of care to ensure that children’s nutritional and health needs are met and food is prepared, stored and served safely within all education and care services.

Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play and leisure. All children have the right to develop to their full potential in an environment which provides for their health and wellbeing.

¹ The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (AGTHE) is produced by the Australian Government and is one of the best ways to show healthy eating guidelines. The AGTHE shows the different food groups and indicates how much food from each food group should be eaten

Document Name: Nutrition Policy	Review date: June 2021	Dates Reviewed: Sept 15, July 16, January 2018, January 2019, Sept 2019
Document Owner: Director ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy Procedure	Release Date: March 2014 Page 1 of 8

We believe that by teaching children to eat wisely and moderately we are supporting them to invest in their future health. Studies show that the habits that children learn during their first five years will significantly affect their future health. A good nutritional program can provide a means of learning for life. Nutrition in childhood influences growth, activity, intellectual and emotional development.

The overall nutrition of children ultimately remains a parental responsibility. However, it is essential that ECMS Early Learning Centres provide adequate nutrition proportionate to the time the children spend in our care. Children in Early Learning and Care may receive 50-80 percent of the food intake whilst in our care. Our ELCs are required to ensure children are provided with at least 50 percent of the recommended daily intake of nutrients.

Appropriate strategies need to be implemented for children with special dietary needs and cultural food requirements. Particular care needs to be taken with children who are diagnosed with food anaphylaxis/allergies/intolerance and ECMS has stringent procedures in place to ensure their safety.

ECMS is aware that children are especially prone to food borne illness because their immune systems are still developing and they cannot fight infection as well as adults can. The main causes of food borne illness are inadequate cooking; improper holding temperatures, contaminated equipment; unsafe food sources; and poor personal hygiene.

The Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 requires that approved provider/Nominated Supervisor/Centre Directors take reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm, injury and infection. In ECMS kindergartens, families are encouraged to send healthy snacks and lunches with their children.

Definitions

Healthy eating

Eating a wide variety of foods from the five food groups each day. These are:

- Fruit
- Vegetables and legumes/beans
- Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese, and alternatives
- Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans.

Healthy eating also means eating in a way that is socially and culturally appropriate, having regular meals and snacks and eating food to satisfy hunger, appetite and energy needs.

Nutrition

The process of providing or obtaining the food necessary for health and growth.

Document Name: Nutrition Policy	Review date: June 2021	Dates Reviewed: Sept 15, July 16, January 2018, January 2019, Sept 2019
Document Owner: Director ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy Procedure	Release Date: March 2014 Page 2 of 8

'Sometimes' foods and drink

Sometimes foods are high in fat, sugar and salt or a combination of these. They typically have very little nutritional value and are often processed and packaged. (Refer Appendix 1 in the Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements Procedure.)

Scope

This applies to all ECMS staff, children, families and volunteers and will be supported to meet this policy.

Allergy Aware

All ECMS services are "Allergy Aware" and do not restrict any foods as a standard procedure. Individual services do have the capacity to restrict certain foods in order to safely care for a child at risk of food allergies/anaphylaxis. The restriction of particular foods within a service will be made on a case by case basis and be determined by consultation with both the Parents, Centre Director/Coordinator and the Area Manager.

Principles

ECMS:

- Is a strong advocate for a child's right to understand about their own health and wellbeing, through an emphasis on nutrition, health programs and positive role modelling and guidance
- Respects the role of Educators; their values and expectations will be considered when implementing providing information, assistance and training
- Values and nurtures the learning environments for the children and their families
- Responds to the specific needs of the children we serve; each child will be considered when planning and providing food and beverages
- Provides access to resources and opportunities for learning to Educators and staff
- Look for opportunities to share, to listen, to enjoy, to understand, to welcome and value all families and believe that mealtimes are an important part of building our community
- Ensures the commitment to nutrition is clear and shared by all. ECMS recognises that every member of the service impacts on children's health and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes healthy eating. All members of our service including Educators, staff, children, families and volunteers will be supported to meet this policy
- Educates the Educators, students and volunteers at the service about nutrition and safe food handling and the importance of ongoing professional development

Document Name: Nutrition Policy	Review date: June 2021	Dates Reviewed: Sept 15, July 16, January 2018, January 2019, Sept 2019
Document Owner: Director ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy Procedure	Release Date: March 2014 Page 3 of 8

- Works with local health professionals, services and other organisations to support Educators and staff to promote healthy eating initiatives
- Encourages families to liaise with the Educators and staff to ensure special dietary requirements are catered for and modified meals are prepared for the children with allergies, sensitivities, intolerances or preferences
- Endeavours to take into account the cultural and religious needs of each of the children and families attending. Culturally diverse meal times and food are embedded into the program, promoting awareness of the diversity of food and its meaning in different cultures
- Does not use food to influence behaviour or encourage children to do things. Food will be available most of the time the programs are running and children will be offered a variety to encourage decision-making and choice.
- Children in 3 and 4-year-old Kindergarten programs will be encouraged to participate in progressive meals and snacks so that they can begin to identify when they are hungry
- Endeavours to provide access to education and information to families and children around the importance of a healthy diet and the dietary needs of young children. Cooking will be part of the activities in programs for children
- Ensures strict adherence to the ECMS Anaphylaxis Policy and Procedures,
- Ensures water (preferably tap) is readily available both indoors and outdoors for children to drink throughout the day
- Provides a suitable place within the service where mothers can breast feed their babies or express breast milk

Roles and responsibilities

Area Manager	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring this policy and associated procedure are implemented in services under their remit
Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the service operates in line with Education and Care Services National Regulations 2012 in relation to provision of nutritious food and beverages and responsible food handling • Ensuring Educators and staff who prepare food undertake the Food Handlers Certificate training. (This course takes approximately one hour and provides the Educator with a certificate) • Ensure that they themselves (or nominated delegate i.e.: Centre Cook) has a Food Handling Supervisors certificate

Document Name: Nutrition Policy	Review date: June 2021	Dates Reviewed: Sept 15, July 16, January 2018, January 2019, Sept 2019
Document Owner: Director ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy Procedure	Release Date: March 2014 Page 4 of 8

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocating appropriate budget/resources to provide for each child's daily nutritional needs and training for food handlers • Developing a menu that meets the requirements of the AGTHE and ensuring the menu is reviewed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/) and meets the criteria determined • Developing a process that identifies children with special dietary requirements to ensure that they receive meals that meet these and can be distributed safely • Developing and implementing the services Food Safety Plan guidelines/checklists for addressing issues/practices that do not meet required standards • Overseeing and guiding staff to ensure adherence to policy.
Centre Cooks	As per Centre Director above
Educators, Volunteers	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of safe food handling practices at all times • Encouraging communication with families about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the service and discourages sometimes foods brought from home • Encouraging and supporting breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods • Promoting healthy food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents • Providing food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices • Providing a positive eating environment which reflects cultural diversity and family values • Undertaking (when applicable) appropriate professional development specific to food handling and the health, safety and wellbeing of children they care for • Ensuring regular open two-way communication with families • Ensuring children are allowed to eat at their own pace • Respecting the food preferences of children

Document Name: Nutrition Policy	Review date: June 2021	Dates Reviewed: Sept 15, July 16, January 2018, January 2019, Sept 2019
Document Owner: Director ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy Procedure	Release Date: March 2014 Page 5 of 8

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring provision of food to children with food allergies/anaphylaxis and follow required special diets • Providing appetising, colourful food; opportunities to try new foods • Maintaining regular mealtimes • Ensuring satisfaction of hunger of children between meals
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Parents/guardians	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being aware of the Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements Policy and Procedure • Feeling confident that their child's nutrition requirement is being assured, and that the service is a safe place • Having the confidence that the service is regularly monitored and supported according to the legislation requirements • Being confident that the Educator has the relevant training and experience to ensure their child's welfare and development • Being confident that their religious and cultural beliefs and practices and lifestyle choices in relation to food are respected • Communicate with staff in regards to food allergies/intolerances or anaphylaxis and update staff of any relevant changes • Providing input and feedback about what and when their child eats.
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Related policy and procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements Procedure • Dental Care Policy and Procedure • Anaphylaxis Policy and Procedure • Child Safe Environment Policy • Child Safe Policy and Procedure • Positive Guidance Policy and Procedure • Workplace, Health, Safety Wellbeing (WH&S) Overview
Relevant legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (amended version October 2017) 165, 167

Document Name: Nutrition Policy	Review date: June 2021	Dates Reviewed: Sept 15, July 16, January 2018, January 2019, Sept 2019
Document Owner: Director ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy Procedure	Release Date: March 2014 Page 6 of 8

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (amended version 2018): 77, 78, 79, 80,90, 91, 168 • Get Up and Grow. Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2009 • Belonging, Being and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF). Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009 • Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF), for all Children from Birth to Eight Years. Department of Education and Training, 2016 • Guide to the National Quality Framework (Updated 2018) • Australian Dietary Guidelines. National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013 • Infant Feeding Guidelines, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013
<p>Support documentation and resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Health and Medical Research Council (2017) <i>The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating</i>, Accessed Sept 2019: https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-guide-healthy-eating • Australian Breastfeeding Association Caregivers Guide to the Breastfed Baby (2018) Accessed Sept 2019 https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/system/files/ABA%20A4%20CaregiversGuideOctober2018.pdf • National Health and Medical Research Council (2012) <i>Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services, 5th edition</i>. Accessed July 2016: nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services • National Professional Support Coordinator Alliance (2012) Getting started with policies for the NQF: Policies in Practice template – Health hygiene and infection control: www.echr.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ips/policies-in-practice-health-hygiene-and-infection-control.pdf?sfvrsn=6 • Department of Health Victoria- Disease Information Advice. Accessed Sept 2019 https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/disease-information-advice

Document Name: Nutrition Policy	Review date: June 2021	Dates Reviewed: Sept 15, July 16, January 2018, January 2019, Sept 2019
Document Owner: Director ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy Procedure	Release Date: March 2014 Page 7 of 8

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Health Victoria <i>Victorian - Preventative Health - Nutrition</i> Accessed September 2019: https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/preventive-health/nutrition • Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia - <i>Examples of Risk Minimisation Strategies for Schools, preschools and Childcare Services</i> (2015) Accessed Sept 2019 https://allergyfacts.org.au/images/pdf/Riskminimisation3.pdf • Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia - <i>Approaching the Management of Anaphylaxis in Schools and Childcare</i> (2016) Accessed Sept 2019. https://allergyfacts.org.au/images/pdf/AppMan316.pdf • Healthy Together Achievement Program: www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/researchandreports/Healthy-Together-Achievement-Program-early-childhood-education-and-care-services • Food Standards Australia / NZ www.foodstandards.gov.au • Tucker Talk Tips www.vaccho.org.au/wd/nutrition/tts/ (healthy, active Koorie kids) • Healthy Eating Advisory Service (https://heas.health.vic.gov.au/) • Australian Human Rights Commission - <i>Breastfeeding</i> Accessed Sept 2019. https://www.humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/11991
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Document Name: Nutrition Policy	Review date: June 2021	Dates Reviewed: Sept 15, July 16, January 2018, January 2019, Sept 2019
Document Owner: Director ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy Procedure	Release Date: March 2014 Page 8 of 8