

# Early Years Services – QA2.12 Nutrition and Healthy Eating

TRIM Reference: D15/32932 Due for Review: 29 February 2024  
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

## Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's commitment to providing and / or promoting healthy food and drink within its Early Years services. This policy outlines guidelines to:

- Encourage families to provide healthy food and drink choices
- Provide a positive and safe eating environment
- Teach children about food and healthy eating
- Communicate with parents about healthy eating
- Encourage staff to learn about healthy eating and role model healthy eating

## Policy Principles

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards: 2.1, 2.1.3, 2.2, 2.2.1, 7.1.1, 7.2.1

Evidence of link to Education and Care Services National Regulations: 77, 78, 79, 168(2) (a), 6.2

- [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011](#)
- [National Quality Standard](#)

### Australian Dietary Guidelines

These guidelines provide information about the types and amounts of foods, food groups and dietary patterns that promote health and wellbeing and reduce the risk of diet-related diseases.

### Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

This guide recommends dietary patterns based on the five food groups that provide appropriate amounts of nutrients and energy.

### Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood

Guidelines promote offering healthy food choices to children (whether food is provided in the setting or brought from home), while also encouraging children to eat to their own appetites, develop positive attitudes toward selecting food and enjoy eating.

### Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Framework identifies eight Practice Principles for Learning and Development, which describe the most effective ways for early childhood professionals to work together and with children and families to facilitate learning and development.

### National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care

The National Quality Framework (NQF) sets a national benchmark for early childhood education and care to ensure children enjoy the best possible conditions in developmental years.

## Scope

Healthy eating has a major influence on children's health and wellbeing. As such this policy is applicable to Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services and all children and families accessing these services.

## **Policy**

Surf Coast Shire Early Years Services will:

- Consistently and actively, promote and encourage the provision of a healthy, safe and varied diet of food and drinks that are nutritious and socially and culturally appropriate for each child.
- Ensure that age appropriate, adequate amounts of food and drinks (with water being the preferred choice) are available and offered on a regular basis throughout the day according to each child's nutritional requirements.
- Ensure all foods and drinks offered are safe and hygienic.
- Ensure any specific cultural, religious or health requirements are considered when providing foods and drinks. Provide a supportive environment to foster healthy eating habits for the future.
- Incorporate children's agency and decision-making into our educational program by planning meal times and other food-related experiences that enable this.
- Where children have known allergies and intolerances, products and food that cause allergic reactions will be taken into consideration.
- Provide a list of suitable and unsuitable foods and drinks for parents and carers to provide for children via emails, newsletters, Educa and handouts.
- Ensure staff are educated and promote healthy food and drink within its Early Years services.

### **Bringing Food to the Service for Other Children to Consume**

All family members and visitors to the service will check with the Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years' Service staff / FDC educator prior to bringing any food to be consumed by other children during the service's operations.

### **Special dietary needs (including food allergies and intolerance)**

Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services/Family Day Care educators will inform parents and carers prior to enrolment, what dietary support can be provided. This may include:

- Parents of children with individual medical dietary needs or allergies will be asked to provide a health care plan written by a relevant health professional (e.g. doctor, specialist, dietitian). The health care plan should include information about relevant medical conditions, emergency procedures and any nutrition intervention required and be no more than 12 months old.
- Parents of children with allergies will be asked to provide an allergy action plan from a relevant health professional - signed and be within the current 12 months.
- The ability of the service to cater for special dietary needs is at the service's discretion.
- In some circumstances, parents and carers may be asked to provide some or all of the food and drinks required for their child. Documenting how you will prevent at-risk children from accessing foods and drinks that are not allowed on a Risk Minimisation and Communication Plan.
- Describing how staff members will be kept informed of procedures for dealing with allergies, specifically emergency procedures for allergic reactions.
- Outlining how information regarding allergies will be communicated to parents and families.
- Indicating where parents and staff can be directed to obtain more information about managing food allergies and intolerances.

### **Mealtime and the eating environment**

Services will provide a health promoting, positive, safe and social eating environment. This can be done by:

- Staff and carers role modelling healthy eating behaviours.  
For example, staff will:
  - sit with children during meal time and enjoy healthy food and drinks
  - provide positive encouragement to children eating healthy food and drinks
  - promote positive discussion about the foods and drinks being served
  - promote a positive, relaxed, social eating environment with children
  - be encouraged to bring food and drinks from home in line with the service's staff health and wellbeing policy
  - avoid discussions about dieting, fad diets and body image.
- Implementing precautions to minimise the risk of choking, such as children being seated and supervised at mealtimes.
- Ensuring food is not used as a punishment, reward or incentive.
- Describing the procedures your service will use for fussy eaters or natural appetite fluctuation.

- Describing how you will celebrate special occasions such as birthdays and how you will communicate information to parents and families about what they can provide.
- Describing how cultural food events and practices will be celebrated.

### **Learning about food and nutrition**

Services will provide opportunities for children to learn about food and healthy eating as recommended in the National Quality Standard, Belonging, Being and Becoming - The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.

- The learning program will include food awareness activities, practical food preparation experiences and planned and spontaneous discussions about food.
- Mealtimes are seen as an opportunity for social learning and for teaching children about appropriate mealtime behaviours.
- Staff will access resources, tools and professional learning experiences to increase their knowledge and capacity to promote healthy eating.

### **Engaging and communicating with staff and educators**

- Staff and educators are supported by having healthy food and drink options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning. Refer to your staff health and wellbeing policy
- Educators recognise that they are role models and are encouraged to bring foods and drinks that are in line with the service's nutrition and healthy eating policy
- Staff are provided with opportunities to update their training on healthy eating and develop the skills required to promote the service's nutrition and healthy eating policy.

### **Enrolment**

Discussion and promotion of appropriate food with families on enrolment is essential in working out what/how/when food and drinks will be managed.

- During the enrolment process discussions will occur and information will be collected about children who have allergies/intolerances or other food choices and preferences.
- The relevant documentation; *Anaphylaxis Management Plan* and *Risk Minimisation and Communication Plan*; *Allergy Action Plan* (see Early Years Medical Conditions and Medication Policy), will be completed in consultation with the parent/guardian and the child's medical practitioner.
- Where food and drink is provided by the service parents/guardians will be made aware of what food and drinks their children have consumed throughout the day.
- Families will be provided with a copy of this Nutrition and Healthy Eating Policy and Procedure.
- As applicable, staff/educators will advise and forward required information to the relevant Early Years Services Team Leader.  
(See also cultural tradition and religious beliefs below).

### **Participation in the Early Years' Service**

Appropriate food and drink will be available to all children at all times. Families and staff/educators will discuss and where appropriate document:

- How the policy will be implemented
- The child's routine and food requirements.
- All relevant documentation for any food induced allergies/intolerance or other food choices and preferences.
- The service will assist families to access specialist resources and advice in relation to the wellbeing of the child where this is indicated.

### **Cultural tradition and religious beliefs**

Some families, depending on their cultural traditions or religious beliefs, may have different food customs than the staff/educators working in the setting.

- These customs might include what foods are eaten, how and when they are eaten, how different foods are prepared and what combinations of foods are eaten.
- Staff/educators will talk to families to ensure that their food preferences and customs can be respected in the setting. This may mean adjusting a child's food intake or snack time in the Service.

## Food Safety

Refer to *Early Years Health*, hygiene and safe food Policy and Procedure

## Definitions

Healthy eating: Healthy eating is 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/or alternatives
- lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans.

Source: Nutrition Australia Vic Division

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

Source: Oxford Dictionaries

'Discretionary choices': 'Discretionary choices' are foods and drinks that are high in saturated fat, added sugar and salt or a combination of these. They typically have very little nutritional value and are often processed and packaged.

## Related Procedure

Nil.

## References

### Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Policies

D15/38696	Early Years OH&S Policy
D14/104807	Early Years Health, hygiene and safe food Policy
D15/16286	Early Years Access and Inclusion Policy and Procedure
D15/35364	Early Years Sustainability Policy
D15/16297	Early Years Enrolment Policy

### Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

D14/28444	Early Years Breast Milk, Milk and Milk Formula Work Instructions
D17/30062	Early Years risk minimisation and communication plan

### Other References

The National Quality Framework's healthy eating standard is supported by the:

- Australian Government Healthy Eating & Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings
- Get Up & Grow: Nutrition and Physical Activity for Early Childhood.
- Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia.
- *Eat for Health* - Australian Dietary Guidelines *Providing the scientific evidence for healthier Australian diets 2013*
- *Eat for Health - Infant Feeding Guidelines - Information for health workers*, Department of Health and Aging, 2012. Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program - *the Healthy Eating and Oral Health benchmark*.
- *Victorian Healthy Eating Advisory Service*

Education and Care Services National Law 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

ACECQA National; Quality Framework Resource Kit

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

My Time, Our Place

Australian Dietary Guidelines, National Health and Medical Research Council, 2013, <http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au>.

### **Document History**

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approved	General Manager Culture and Community – 1 April 2014
2	Amended	Manager Aged and Family – 1 June 2015
3	Amended	Manager Aged and Family – 27 April 2018
4	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 28 November 2019
5	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 8 April 2021
6	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 30 August 2022