

Early Years Services – QA2.7 Health, hygiene and safe food practices

TRIM Reference: D14/104807 Due for Review: 6 February 2027
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

The Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services health, hygiene and safe food practices aims to provide a safe and hygienic environment for all food storage, preparation and serving of food across the Early Years Services.

Policy Principles

Evidence of link to National Quality Standards: 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.1, 3.1.1, 3.2.2,
Evidence of link to Education & Care Services National Regulations: 77, 78, 79, 80, 90, 168-172
Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2020

DE Website

Current requirements specify that all registered food premises, including schools, must demonstrate that the food prepared and served is safe to eat in accordance with the *Victorian Food Act 1984 (and Amendments)* and the *Food Standards Code Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)*.

EAT FOR HEALTH Australian Dietary Guidelines *Providing the scientific evidence for healthier Australian diets 2013*: GUIDELINE 5 - Food Safety: Care for your food; prepare and store it safely.

Scope

The overarching food safety policy aims to promote a 'food safe' environment through the education and implementation of food safety principles within the daily practices of the Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services.

Where families provide the food and beverage for their child attending the service, the role of the staff/educators is to assist in the provision of a 'food safe' environment and education of families. Where the Early Years' Service provides food and beverages for children accessing the service, this will be provided in line with the *Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Nutrition & Healthy Eating Policy & Procedure*.

Policy

Education and Training

- When providing cooking experiences for children, Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services will ensure that a staff member is trained in current food safe practices, including
- The safe transportation, storage, hygiene and handling of food to be used in the Early Years Services.
- Staff must use correct hygiene practices, such as washing hands, using gloves if required and tongs.
- Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services will actively educate all children, families and Educators regarding food safety standards in a variety of ways.
- Surf Coast Shire Council will promote that all food provided for Early Years events will be purchased from an approved food supplier.
- Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services will promote the use of insulated lunch boxes or freezer packs to ensure that perishable foods are kept cool.

Involving Children in Food Preparation

Involving children in food preparation is an opportunity to demonstrate and reinforce messages about food safety. Cooking is a safe and enjoyable activity for children in the Early Years Services setting (where applicable) as long as some basic precautions are taken:

- Ensure adequate supervision at all times;
- Always be aware of the dangers of heat;
- Choose age-appropriate cooking activities;
- If available children should wear clean protective aprons or smocks and tie up any long hair;
- Being mindful of food intolerances and food allergies.
- Ensure children wash their hands before and after food preparation and when necessary.

The cooking experience is an opportunity to reinforce hand washing and cleanliness in the kitchen, so children will take the safe food message home with them.

Family Transporting and Storage of Food and beverages to the Early Years' Service (where applicable),

Family Responsibilities

- Families are responsible for transporting and storing food and beverages to the service (to be consumed by their child) in the appropriate containers or placed in services fridge to keep food and beverages at the required temperature until consumed by the child.
- For storage of breast milk/milk/milk formula by the service, for consumption at the service by infants/toddlers as applicable to the service refer to, Attachment 1 – *Early Years Breast Milk, Milk & Milk Formula Works Instructions*.

Early Years Services Responsibilities

- Early Years Services staff will provide information and education to families about the appropriate transporting and storage of food brought to the service to be consumed by their child at the service.
- Early Years Services staff must take due care in transporting food and beverages for use in the provision of Early Years Services, including excursions.
- Early Years Services staff must ensure time spent transporting food and beverages is kept to a minimum to reduce the risk of food contamination of high-risk foods. Where applicable, food and beverages should be transported in a cooler.
- Food and beverages must be transported separately from chemicals (including but not limited to cleaning materials).
- Early Years Services staff will communicate with families that food prepared from home to be shared with all children (e.g. birthdays, cultural celebrations) is not permitted.

Food Prepared, Heated and Stored at the service: (in exceptional circumstance in relation to heating of food at centre-based services)

Why it is important to prepare and store food safely:

- Foodborne illness results from consuming contaminated food or drink. Correct handling of food during all stages of its preparation and storage is essential in reducing the risk of contamination and foodborne illness.
- The ability of bacteria to grow in a food depends on external factors (such as temperature) as well as characteristics of the food itself, such as protein content, water content and pH.

For example, bacteria are least active in very acidic foods (pH less than 4.5).

- Most bacteria can multiply at temperatures between 5°C and 60°C but a few pathogenic bacteria multiply at temperatures at or below 5°C. Exposure to high temperatures destroys the vegetative cells of most bacteria, although some have heat-resistant spores or produce histamines and toxins that survive the cooking process.
- Some bacteria multiply within 2 hours and can reach an infective dose in 4–6 hours. Refrigeration at or below 5°C slows the growth of bacteria and the rate of chemical change in food.
- The method chosen for thawing food should minimise the time the food is at room temperature, where microorganisms can multiply. Ready-to-eat frozen foods should be thawed in the refrigerator or under cold water in an airtight plastic wrapper or bag, with the water changed every 30 minutes.
- High risk foods should be cooked to at least 75°C. A probe thermometer should be used to check food is properly cooked to a minimum safe temperature.

- Not all meats need to be cooked thoroughly: steaks, whole fillet, chops and whole pieces of roast meat can be eaten rare. In contrast, rolled and/or stuffed meats, poultry, pork, sausages and mince should always be cooked all the way through, until the juices run clear when the meat is pierced.
- Cooking does not guarantee safety because some bacterial spores can survive several hours of cooking and still grow later in the food if there is poor temperature control. Foods such as stews and other meat and poultry dishes that will be eaten later should be cooled as quickly as possible to prevent spores from germinating and bacteria from multiplying.
- Foods that have just been cooked and are still very hot can be cooled at room temperature until the temperature of the food drops to 60°C. Cooling hot food too slowly can allow bacteria to multiply and cause food poisoning. To avoid this, high risk food must be cooled from 60°C to 21°C within two hours and then cooled to 5°C or colder within the next four hours.

Practical considerations: care for your food; prepare and store it safely

- The use of date marking provides a guide on the shelf life of a food item in terms of quality and safety. The term 'best before' indicates the length of time a food should keep before it begins to deteriorate while 'use by' indicates how long a food can be expected to remain safe provided it has been stored according to any stated storage conditions and the package is unopened.

Hygiene Procedure

Refer to the *Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy and Procedure* for information in relation to hygiene procedures.

Managing Food Intolerances and Allergies

Refer to the *Early Years Medical Conditions and Medications Policy and Procedure* for information in relation to responding to food intolerances and food allergies.

Definitions

Clean: The action of making equipment, utensils, crockery in a condition free from visible matter and odours.

Cross Contamination: Harmful bacteria or allergens spread to food from other food, surfaces, hands or equipment.

Food Safe: Meeting recommended requirements that will endeavour to ensure an individual's safety when eating food.

Food Safety Supervisor: Staff member within the service that is responsible for looking after food safety (where applicable).

Food Safety Plan: Documentation that systematically is followed by staff to check and record a food handling activity (where applicable).

Food Handlers: Any person who directly engages in food handling for a food business or organisation that provides food.

Infectious diseases: any condition that may be spread to others through handling food.

High risk foods can be described as¹: food which has the potential to support the growth of pathogenic microorganisms, such as dairy products, meat, poultry, fish and rice (to name a few). Foods such as this need to be temperature controlled.

Sanitise: means to apply heat or chemicals, heat and chemicals or other processes, to a surface so that the number of micro-organisms on the surface is reduced to a level that does not compromise the safety of food and does not permit the transmission of infectious disease.

Related Procedure

Nil.

¹ Surf Coast Shire Council Environmental Health, 2014

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Policies

MPP18	Workplace Health & Safety Policy
D15/32932	Early Years Nutrition, Healthy Eating and Oral Health Policy
D22/217989	Early Years Enrolment and Orientation Policy
D15/32925	Early Years Medical Conditions and Medications Policy
D15/35312	Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy
D14/105413	Early Years Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
D14/94986	Early Years First Aid Policy
D15/33004	Early Years Supervision of Children Policy
D14/70705	Early Years Excursion Policy

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

D14/28444	Early Years Breast Milk, Milk and Milk Formula Work Instruction
D14/87971	Early Years Risk Assessment Management Plan
D15/63330	Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Early Years Services Record Form (Kinderloop for Kindergarten Programs)
D17/30062	Early Years risk minimisation and communication plan (Kinderloop for Kindergarten Programs)

Other References

Food Act 1984
 Food Standards Code
 Education and Care Services National Law 2010
 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
 ACECQA National; Quality Framework Resource Kit
 Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2020

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 May 2015
3	Amended	Manager Aged and Family – 21 June 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
7	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 30 January 2024
8	Amended	Manager Community Strengthening – 6 August 2025