Food, Nutrition, Beverage and Dietary Requirements Policy

Policy first issued	12th August 2016
Current review date	18th September 2024
Personnel responsible	Childcare Operations

NQS 2 Children's Health and Safety

NQS

QA 2	2.1.3	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.

National Regulations

Regs	77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
	78	Food and beverages
	79	Service providing food and beverages
	80	Weekly menu
	90	Medical conditions policy
	91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
	162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
	168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures

EYLF

LO 3	Children recognise and communicate their bodily needs (for example, thirst, hunger, rest, comfort, physical activity)
	Children are happy, healthy, safe and connected to others
	Children show an increasing awareness of healthy lifestyles and good nutrition
	Educators promote continuity of children's personal health and hygiene by sharing ownership of routines and schedules with children, families and the community.
	Educators discuss health and safety issues with children and involve them in developing guidelines to keep the environment safe for all
	Educators engage children in experiences, conversations and routines that promote healthy lifestyles and good nutrition.
	Educators model and reinforce health, nutrition and personal hygiene practices with children.

Aim

Our Centre aims to promote good nutrition and healthy food habits and attitudes to all children and families at the Centre. We also aim to support and provide for children with food allergies, dietary requirements or restrictions, and specific cultural or religious practices.

Related Policies

Additional Needs Policy
Enrolment and Orientation Policy
Health and Hygiene Policy
Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy
Food Preparation and Food Hygiene Policy

Implementation

- **The Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, volunteers and students will :** Ensure healthy drinks are promoted and discretionary / sometimes drinks are not permitted to be brought in to the Centre. Ensure children have access to water and offer them water regularly during the day.

- Ensure children are offered foods and beverages throughout the day that meet their nutritional and developmental needs and any specific dietary requirements. These requirements may be based on written advice from families (e.g. in the enrolment form) or as part of a child's medical management plan.
- Provide foods that take into account each child's likes, dislikes, culture and religion. Families will be reminded to update this information regularly or when necessary.
- Ensure meals are consistent with the Global Menu, endorsed by Nutrition Australia.
- Ensure food is consistent with the Government's Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013 and Infants Feeding Guidelines. The Guidelines and Summaries are available on the NHMRC website: http://nhmrc.gov.au.
- Follow the guidelines for serving different types of food and the serving sizes in the Guidelines and may use the Australian Government 'eat for health' calculator http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eat-health-calculators.
- Encourage families to provide health food for their children at home which is consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, talk to families about their child's food intake and voice any concerns about their child's eating.
- Provide food and beverages that minimise the risk of children choking.
- Provide families with daily information about their child's food and beverage intake and related experiences.
- Provide a weekly menu of food and beverages which meets the criteria of Nutrition Australia's Healthy Eating Advisory Service, that accurately describes the food and beverages provided every day.
- Display the weekly menu in a prominent area where it can be easily viewed by parents. We will also display nutritional information for families and keep them regularly updated.
- Feed babies individually.
- Provide age and developmentally appropriately utensils and furniture for each child.
- Ensure meal times are relaxed, pleasant and timed to meet most children's needs.
- Integrate learning about food and nutrition in the Curriculum.
- Never use food as a punishment, reward or as a bribe.
- Encourage toddlers and young children to develop their sense of agency by feeding themselves independently and developing their social skills at meal times.
- Model and reinforce healthy eating habits and food options with children during eating times.

The Nominated Supervisor will ensure staff receive training in nutrition, food safety and other cultures' food customs if professional development in these areas is required.

Beverages

Our Centre will provide milk and water as the main beverages for consumption throughout the day.

Water – Children will have access to their water bottles and fresh drinking water at all times. Families are required to take the drink bottle home nightly to be cleaned.

Milk – Should a child require a certain variety of milk / milk product due to allergy or special requirement the Centre will provide this for the child; however, this Centre does not provide formula for formula-fed babies / infants.

Breastfeeding, Breast Milk and Bottle Warming

Healthy lifestyles and good nutrition for each child is paramount. We encourage all families to continue breast feeding their child until at least 12 months in line with recommendations by recognised authorities, and will feed children breast milk supplied by their families.

Educators and mothers who breastfeed at the Centre

We support mothers who wish to breastfeed at the Centre by providing a quiet, relaxing place with a comfortable chair for mothers to breastfeed or express milk. Educators will take into account mothers' preferences for privacy. A sign will also be placed on the door when a mother is using the facilities.

All reasonable efforts will also be made to support educators who continue breastfeeding their child when they (return to) work at the Centre. For example, an educator returning from maternity leave may have a meeting with the Nominated Supervisor to discuss:

- More flexible work arrangements
- The provision of lactation breaks for the educator to express milk or breastfeed her child. Educator to child ratios will not be compromised during these breaks.

Breast Milk Procedure

Breast milk that has been expressed should be brought to the Centre in a clean sterile container labelled with the date of expression and the child's name. We encourage families to transport milk to the Centre in cooler bags and eskies. Educators will:

- Put the breast milk in the fridge as soon as families arrive at the Centre.
- Refrigerate the milk at 4° Celsius until it is required. Bottles containing breast milk will be stored in the Centre fridge to ensure that the required temperature is maintained.
- Cross check completed by 2 educators in the room that the Breast Milk is being given to the correct child as per bottle log instructions. This check will be documented on the bottle log.
- Warm and / or thaw breast milk by standing the container / bottle in a container of warm water.
- Test the temperature of the milk before giving it to the child.
- Consult individual families for instructions if they do not have enough breast milk to meet the child's needs that day.
- Return any unused breast milk to families when they collect their child. Educators will not store unused milk at the Centre.

Formula Bottles Procedure

- Pre-mixed formula should be brought to the Centre in a clean sterile container labelled with the child's name.
- Formula should be brought into the Centre in pre-measured portions along with a bottle filled correctly with boiled water. The Centre will not make up formula for children without having the correct portion of formula and water supplied in a bottle.
- Families may choose to pre-make bottles rather than provide formula portions and water bottles.
- We encourage families to bring an extra portion of milk as feeding routines may differ to the routine at home, the child may refuse a bottle and this may also be required to assist with settling the child.
- Bottles containing pre-made formula will be stored in the Centre fridge to ensure that the required temperature is maintained.

Safe Storage and Heating of Babies Bottles (Please display)

Our Centre will not use microwaves because milk may not heat evenly.

Bottle Warmers

Our Centre will use bottle warmers that have a thermostat control to heat Infant Formula / Cow's Milk / Breast Milk.

- The Centre will use the bottle warmer as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Check the temperature of the formula / milk on the inside of the wrist before giving to the child to ensure contents are at a safe temperature.
- Educators will ensure that bottle warmers are inaccessible to children at all times.
- Bottles will be warmed for less than 10 minutes.
- Warmed milk will not be reheated and reoffered to a child at a later time.

Allergies and Special Requirements

Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) research tells us that allergic reactions are becoming more common in children. An allergy develops when the immune system recognises and responds to something in the environment that is normally harmless: for example, food proteins, pollens or dust mites.

A moderate allergic reaction will include one or more of these symptoms:

- Hives or welts
- A tingling feeling around the mouth
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting and or diarrhoea
- Facial swelling

A severe allergic relation will include one or more of these symptoms:

- Difficulty / noisy breathing
- Swelling of the tongue and throat
- Difficulty talking
- Loss of consciousness and or collapse
- Pale and floppy

Allergies and Special Requirements

1. Obtaining Medical Information

The Nominated Supervisor will ask for medical information at the time of enrolment of children. Following identification of children with allergies, the next step is the provision of documentation by parents, such as an **ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis and an Allergy Management Plan**, which has been provided by a registered medical practitioner and includes the following:

- Clear identification of the child (photo).
- Documentation of the allergic triggers.
- Documentation of the first aid response including any prescribed medication.
- Identification and contact details of the doctor who has signed the action plan.
- This plan must be updated and certified by a registered medical practitioner annually for as long as required (Please refer to the *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*).

2. Allergy Awareness and Education for Staff and Educators

Recognition of the risk and understanding of the steps that can be taken to minimise food anaphylaxis by all those responsible for the care of children in our Centre, are the basis of prevention.
All educators and staff are required to obtain and hold a current anaphylaxis certificate. Internal training is completed each term by the Nominated Supervisor.
Important topics that need to be addressed in the educational process are:

- What is an allergy?
- What is anaphylaxis?
- What are the triggers for allergy and anaphylaxis?
- How is anaphylaxis recognised?
- How can anaphylaxis be prevented?
- What should be done in the event of a child having a severe allergic reaction?
- Instruction on the use of an **adrenaline auto-injector (EpiPen or Anapen)** or any other medication the child may require.

3. Practical strategies to avoid exposure to known triggers

Avoidance of specific triggers is the basis of anaphylaxis prevention.

Appropriate avoidance measures are critically dependent on education of the child, his / her peers and all Centre personnel.
The measures that are appropriate will depend on the nature of the Allergen, the possible routes of exposure to food allergens and the age of the child.
As a general principle it is not recommended that children in our Centre with a food allergy be physically isolated from other children.

Nut Free Centre: All of our Centres are nut-aware. Products containing whole nuts and nut products will not be served at the Centre. Items that state that they may contain traces of nuts may be used within the menu but these items will not be given to a child with a nut allergy unless it has been specified by the family.

Allergy and Special Requirement Cards and Individual Labels: All children who have an allergy and special requirement will have an allergy card and individual label which is placed on the food trolley and an individually prepared meal

Ingredients Labels: All food prepared at the Centre will be served with an ingredients label.
(Please see information and example on Page 7 of this policy).

Preparation and Serving of Food Procedure: Children in the Centre with a special dietary requirement will not be given food to consume unless it has been specifically prepared for that child and is labelled accordingly.

Food Preparation Procedure

Step 1: Prepare and portion children's individual meals according to the Centre's allergy and special requirement chart. **A child with an allergy to a meal should be given their separately prepared meal in a RED bowl / plate / cup.**
Step 2: Cling wrap each serve separately.
Step 3: Stick child's individual label onto their individually prepared food.
Step 4: Place the individual meal serve onto the appropriate trolley.
Step 5: Place ingredients sticker label on the remaining meal.
Step 5: A two-person allergy check must be completed by the Centre cook and Responsible Person in charge of the Centre, and documented on the Allergy Cross Check log.

Food Serving Procedure
Where possible, ensure that a permanent staff member collects the trolley from the Centre cook, and confirms with them that the food meets the requirements of all children.

Step 1: Ensure that the allergy and special requirements chart is in the area where food is served
Step 2: Know children who have a special dietary requirement.
Step 3: Assess the food that has been prepared to ensure that it suits the child's individual requirements.

- Cross check allergy and special requirement chart against ingredients list.
- Cross check label to Child's requirements.
- Cross check to child's individual daily routine sheet.
- Cross check with a second staff member in the room.
- Complete the Allergy Cross Check Log
  Only when you are confident that the food is safe for the child to consume then you may serve it to the child.

Note: ***This procedure is located on each food trolley in the Centre.***

4. Age Appropriate Education of Children with Severe Food Allergies

It is primarily the responsibility that the child is taught to care for themselves. The Centre also has a role to implement the care plan and reinforce appropriate avoidance and management strategies.
Children are dependent on educators / staff for providing a safe environment. As children mature they are able to take more responsibility for their own care.

General Allergy Safety Measures

- There should be no trading and sharing of food, food utensils and food containers.
- It is essential that children with severe food allergies should only eat lunches and snacks that have been prepared specifically for them.
- Bottles should be clearly labelled with the name of the child.
- The use of food in crafts, cooking classes and science experiments may need to be restricted depending on the allergies of particular children.
- Food preparation personnel should be instructed about measures necessary to prevent cross contamination during the handling, preparation and serving of food. Examples would include the careful cleaning of food preparation areas after use and cleaning of utensils when preparing allergenic foods (please refer to the *'Food Safety Plan'*).
- Food removal from the Centre should only occur following recommendation by a relevant medical specialist and the provision of documentation of this recommendation.
- This Centre reserves the right to ask families to supply their own food for a child when it is no longer possible for the Centre to do so due to the type or complication of allergy and its requirements.
- Food from outside of the Centre is not permitted to be consumed in the Centre, unless it has been approved by the Nominated Supervisor.
- Employees will only consume food brought from outside of the Centre in the staff room.
- Employees will not bring whole nuts or nut products to eat within the Centre.
- Only food or food products that have been purchased or prepared by the Centre are to be stored in store rooms / prep rooms or children's rooms.
- Employees are only to consume water in children's rooms. This must be stored in a clearly labelled water bottle and kept out of reach of children.

Allergy and Special Requirement Communication Plan Enrolment

On enrolment, all families of children with an allergy or special requirement will be provided with a copy of the Centre's current menu and stock list (for traces of nut, milk, egg). Families are asked to document what their child is not able to eat and this information is transferred onto the allergy and special requirement chart.

On enrolment, the family will also be issued with a copy of this policy along with the Centre's '*Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*'.

Transfer of Information from the Nominated Supervisor to the Leading Educator and Cook

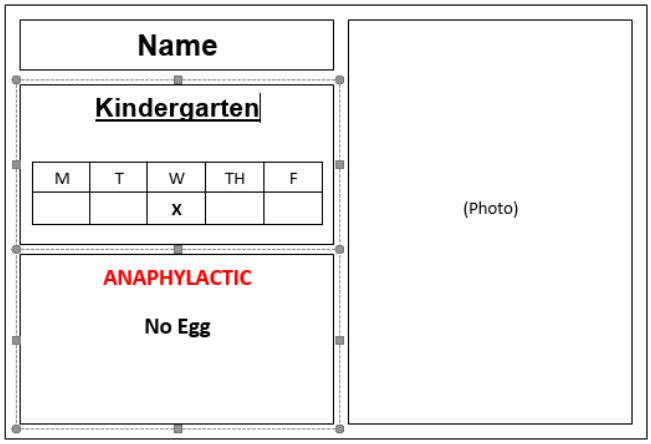
Once all of the documentation and information has been formalised, the Nominated Supervisor will arrange a meeting with the leading educator of the child's room and with the cook. The child's requirements are discussed and strategies are put in place to ensure that all of the required information is placed in the required locations. This is also the process when a child's requirements are reviewed or changed. The leading teacher is to inform all persons caring for and educating children in the room of the child's individual requirements. The leading educator is also responsible for ensuring that the child's documentation and medication (if applicable) are appropriately stored in the room and moved with the child, should the location of care change.

Documentation and Medication
The Nominated Supervisor and leading educator will ensure that the child's medication and documentation, such as emergency plans and risk minimisation plans, are appropriately stored in the room in which the child is being cared for and educated. This must move with the child if the child's location in the Centre changes from its primary care room. Documentation such as medical plans should be reviewed annually by the family and by a registered medical practitioner. The family is expected to communicate this with the Nominated Supervisor and provide the updated documentation.

Allergy and Special Requirement Chart
All allergies and special requirements are documented on an allergy and special requirement chart. This chart also includes a photo of the child and is printed in colour. This chart is displayed in each room in the Centre in the rooms RIFF (Room Information Flip Folder). This folder is located in the area in which food is served. A copy of the allergy and special requirement chart is also kept in the office / reception with all emergency plans stored with it.

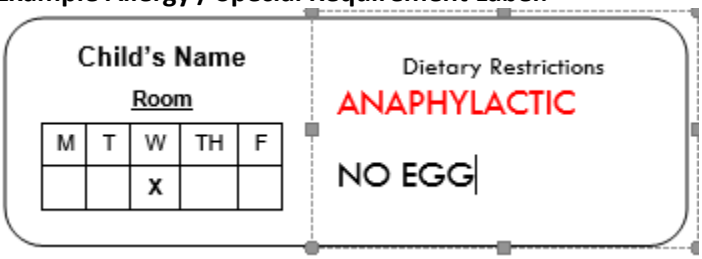
Allergy / Special Requirements Cards
Allergy and special requirement cards will be provided for all children with allergies and special requirements. The allergy cards will be placed on the applicable food trolley. The child's allergy / requirement, colour photo, room and days of attendance will be documented on this card.

Example Allergy / Special Requirement Card:



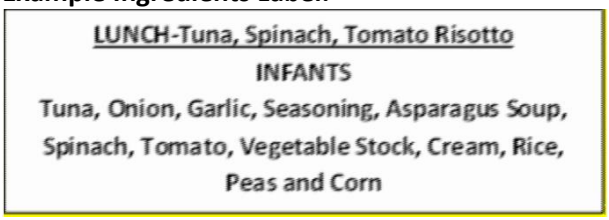
Individual Allergy / Special Requirement Labels
Individual allergy labels are placed on all meals which are prepared for children with allergies and special requirements.

Example Allergy / Special Requirement Label:



Ingredients Labels
Ingredients labels are placed on all main meals that are placed on the trolley. Educators are required to cross check the ingredients of a dish to the child's individual needs prior to serving the child food.

Example Ingredients Label:



Food Diaries

The Centre will provide a food diary, which documents the food and beverage consumption of children with *severe* allergies and special requirements. This is not practised for all children and will need to be requested by the family or offered by the Nominated Supervisor. Should the introduction of a food diary occur, the leading educator of the child's room is responsible for ensuring that all food and beverage consumption is documented in the diary on each occasion that the child attends the Centre.

Cultural and Religious Dietary Requirements

The Centre will ensure children are offered foods and beverages throughout the day that are appropriate to their nutritional and specific dietary requirements based on written advice from families that is typically set out in a child's Enrolment Form. These may be based on likes, dislikes, growth and developmental needs, cultural, religious or health requirements. Families are responsible for updating this information when required by completing an Allergy / Special Requirement Update form.

The family will be provided with a copy of the menu and is asked to indicate the foods which the child will not be able to consume. Together the food safety supervisor and the family will organise alternate meals which look like (as much as possible) the meals which are being provided for the other children. This information is stored in the kitchen in the special dietary needs folder. Each child who has these needs has a photo and information card which is located on the food trolley for that room, along with individual labels for prepared meals.

Halal Food Measures

- All requirements including cultural and religious requirements will be placed on the Centre's Allergies and Special Dietary Requirements list.
- Halal certification is obtained from the Centre's meat supplier and is displayed in the Centre.
- Food preparation and hygiene practices are in place to ensure that cross contamination is avoided.
- There may be variations of Halal requirements for individual families. The Nominated Supervisor will seek clarifications on specific needs should it be required.

Fussy Eaters

We are committed to ensuring that meal times in our Centre are positive for all children and that a child has an opportunity of choice after encouragement to try the food, should they dislike the meal offered. Children who do not eat during routine meal times or children who are hungry will be provided with foods at periods other than meal times or snack times. Communication with families about children's eating patterns and behaviour in our care should occur. Should food consumption be minimal, a food plan and diary will be maintained by the Centre and will require input from the family in setting goals and strategies for the child.

Promoting Healthy Living, Good Nutrition and an Optimum Environment for Meal Routines

- Our Centre supports food preferences to being healthy choices and encourages the development of ongoing healthy eating patterns.
- We include nutritional education into our daily program and communicate this with parents.
- Children will have the opportunity in our program to grow and harvest fruit / vegetables, be involved in cooking experiences and also to have discussions about food, eating and human growth.

- The environment will encourage the transmission of family and multi-cultural values into our practices by including cultural meals in our menu which reflect the backgrounds of all families and gain information about families' eating styles by asking for their involvement.
- We will ensure that the children will eat in a clean, calm and aesthetically pleasing environment.
- Whilst the children are consuming food, educators / staff will actively be involved in social conversation, eating the same food and role model socially acceptable behaviours.
- Food will not be used as a punishment, bribe or reward.
- Educators / staff will ensure that they discuss the food in a positive manner.
- Educators / staff will not allow children to be force fed.
- Children will be supported and encouraged to self-feed and develop social skills at meal times.
- Children are encouraged to participate in setting the tables, serving of food and pouring of beverages along with placement or rinsing of dirty dishes (where this is age and stage appropriate).
- Progressive meal times allow children to choose to eat when they are hungry, rather than according to a timetable. This allows for more meaningful interactions at meal times and a smoother flow throughout the day. Children can make decisions based on their own needs, and can be supported to access food and water throughout the day by educators / staff.
- Decisions with respect to incorporating progressive meal times into the educational program must take into account the needs, ages and developmental stages of all children.

Dental Care

Educators / staff will promote dental care and healthy teeth through discussions and activities integrated into the daily routine and program of the room. The Centre will access a professional dental health service to hold an annual information session with children and provide information to families about dental health and hygiene.

Choking Precautions

Finger foods are introduced as hand / eye co-ordination develops. Choking is always a concern when young children help themselves to finger food.

To minimise the risk of choking, we follow safe practices such as:

- All children should be seated when eating.
- Food is not given to a child who is laughing, crying or otherwise upset.
- Children are never forced to eat.
- Educators / staff act as a role model – encouraging children to chew well and not to overfill their mouths.
- Ensure children's mouths are empty of food before allowing play to resume.
- All educators / staff are trained in first aid.
- Children are supervised when they are eating.
- Ensure foods and beverages that are offered have a reduced risk of being a choking hazard.

Some foods have greater choking risks than others. The following recommendations will be adhered to in our Centre:

- Nuts, lollies and corn chips will not be served in the Centre.
- Popcorn will not be served to children under 3 years of age.
- Carrot and apple should be grated or sliced thinly for children under two years of age.
- Vegetable sticks will be blanched before serving to children between two and three years of age.
- It may be appropriate to squash peas and halve grapes for children under two years of age,
- Skin, gristle and bones will be removed from meat.
- Seeds will be removed from fruit.
- Skin will be removed from fruit for children under one year of age.
- Fruit will be cut into small pieces / mashed or pureed for children under one year of age.

Water will be served with meals assisting children to cleanse their mouth and to remove loose particles, reducing the risk of choking.

Introducing Solids

Infants will be introduced to solids under the parent's direction. Parents will be asked to complete a form indicating the solid foods which the child can consume in our care.

Special Occasion Food

Special celebration days occur at the Centre and a menu that is in line with nutritional standards will be devised by our Centre Director and Food Safety Supervisor.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthday Celebrations are a very special time for children. The Centre will celebrate birthdays by providing the child with a cake for all children where celebrations are appropriate to cultural and religious beliefs. The cake will be served at afternoon tea along with the afternoon tea specified on that day's menu. The menu food will be offered to children first and then the cake will follow, after each child has had the opportunity to eat the food provided to ensure that they receive their recommended nutritional daily intake.

Due to allergy requirements and health regulations cakes that have not been provided by the Centre will not be served at our Centre. Party food such as lollies, chips and snack foods are not accepted at our Centre. If families would like to contribute to the occasion, items such as party hats and whistles will be suggested.

Emergency Food

Emergency food is food which is available at the Centre at all times. The following situations would be cause to provide emergency food to children:

Emergency Evacuation:

Where the Centre is to be evacuated, the cook will bring the emergency food evacuation bag which contains the following:

- 1x jug (for water)
- Plastic cups (one per child)
- Dry biscuits suitable for all children's consumption

Power Outage / Gas Malfunction:

In the event of an emergency where the Centre is unable to use cooking facilities, sandwiches will be provided as an alternative. The Nominated Supervisor will make a person available to assist in obtaining the required ingredients and the preparation of the food.

Unusable Food:

Where a supplier has forgotten to deliver or provided unusable food the cook will ensure that there are always ingredients in the store to provide children with an alternate meal.

Staff Training and Qualifications

All educators / staff employed at this Centre will be appropriately trained in First Aid, CPR, Anaphylaxis Management and Food Handling. This training will be carried out as per the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 and will be reinforced at yearly intervals.

The appointed Cook in the Centre must hold a Food Safety Supervisor certificate and will be required to attend one relevant professional development session of their choice per year.

Staff Induction

At the time of a new appointment in the position of Food Safety Supervisor (cook) at the Centre they will be required to complete an online and physical induction held by the Nominated Supervisor or Certified Supervisor. This includes information and the Centre's policies surrounding Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements. The Nominated Supervisor will formally inform families of the change to the appointment of the cook and offer families the opportunity to meet personally with the new cook to discuss their child's needs.
At the time of a new appointment of educators / staff at the Centre they will be required to complete an online and physical induction held by the Nominated Supervisor or Certified Supervisor. This includes information central to the Centre Operations and the Centre's Policies surrounding Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements.

Supporting Staff and Educators
Staff are supported to consume healthy foods and drinks and maintain good oral health practices at work. When food is provided to educators and staff for meetings, celebrations and events, healthy food options are included and discretionary options are discouraged.

Sources

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
My Time, Our Place Framework for School Age Care
National Quality Standard
Safe Food Australia, 2nd Edition. January 2001
Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood
Infant Feeding Guidelines 2012
Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013
Eat for Health: Dept. Health and Ageing and NHMRX
Food Standards Code
Food Safety Standards www.foodstandards.gov.au
Food Safety Standards for Australia 2001
Food Standards Australia and New Zealand Act 1991
Food Standards Australia New Zealand Regulations 1994
Food Act 1984
Department of Health Vic: Food Safety
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007
Australian Breast Feeding Association Guidelines
Staying Healthy: Preventing Infectious Diseases in Early Childhood Education and Care Services.

Review

The policy will be reviewed annually. The review will be conducted by:

- Management
- Employees
- Families
- Interested Parties

Last reviewed: 18.09.2024 **Date for next review: September 2025**