

Nutrition and Beverages

Policy Statement

Meerilinga recognises the importance of healthy eating to promote the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting the healthy food and drink choices of children in our care. It is acknowledged that the early childhood setting has an important role in supporting families in healthy eating. Our service therefore recognises the importance of supporting families to provide healthy food and drink to their children.

Policy Purpose

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) Services are required by legislation to ensure the provision of healthy foods and drinks that meet the requirements for children according to the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*. It is essential that our service partners with families to provide education about nutrition, and promote healthy eating habits for young children to positively influence their health and wellbeing, and reduce the risk of diet-related conditions and chronic diseases in children.

We believe in providing a positive eating environment that reflects dietary requirements, cultural and family values, and promotes lifelong learning for children, as we commit to implementing and embedding the healthy eating key messages.

We recognise food is used to help celebrate special occasions in different families, cultures and festivals. Food is an important part of any celebration in all nations of the world, regardless of culture or religion.

Scope

This policy applies to families and staff including volunteers and students engaged with Meerilinga. The daily nutritional needs of a child will be in context for the number of hours in a service on any given day for the duration of that child's attendance.

Exclusions

Policy Review

At least annually or from time to time the organisation may make changes to this policy to improve the effectiveness of its operation and customer service.

Implementation

Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition is integral to children's wellbeing and self-confidence and embedded in everyday routines and experiences. Children, families and staff will be encouraged to develop healthy eating choices. Families are to ensure that children have food according to the time of day before arriving.

Children are to bring their own fruit/snack in a 'child friendly', clearly labelled and clean container sufficient for the duration of stay, this can include morning or afternoon tea and lunch (in full day sessions).

We encourage parents to send a variety of healthy food choices with no preparatory needs such as cooking and heating. Pre-cut fresh fruits and vegetables, cheeses, unflavoured milk, yogurt, and whole grain breads or crackers are good options.

Choices should also consider children's age and experience in managing their food and beverage needs independently so avoiding complex mixing, peeling, difficult packaging and where children may be transitioning between first and adult teeth, temporarily preparing foods by removing hard skins and pre-cut. Many common foods present choking hazards such as sausage skin, chunks of meat or cheese, whole grapes or raw vegetables. Guides and ideas on foods to prepare can be located at <http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/national/resources/children>

Water is the primary drink and children have accessibility to their water bottles throughout the session. Children are to bring their own clearly labelled and clean water bottle each session sufficient for the duration of stay.

Rolling morning or afternoon tea is encouraged and children have access to their food and water throughout their stay. Families are to advise educators if children's food needs refrigeration.

Restrictions are in place to ensure protection of children and others with food sensitivity or allergy and only healthy options are demonstrated and encouraged. Nuts (including fillings or foods containing nuts), popcorn/corn chips, cordials, juices, junk food, flavoured milks and treats are not accepted for food and beverage items at the service.

Eggs and fillings or foods containing eggs or containers will not be accepted on days where a person is known to have a sensitivity or allergy. Educators will advise families of days these products will not be accepted.

Nutrition and Beverages Process	
Process Owner	CEO
Effective Date	14 June 2017
Date of Last Revision	1 July 2016

Process Details	
	Description
1.	<p>Families and children will be supported with information on suitable food and drink to pack for their children. Information about child nutrition and safe food practices are promoted to families on a regular basis through resources, e news, parent sharing involvement activities. Families will be consulted and asked to share family and multicultural values and experiences to enrich the variety and enjoyment of food. Consideration will be given to the special dietary needs of all children participating and these will be recorded and acted on by Educators. The importance of healthy food choices and experiences will form the basis for regular and active inclusion in all children's program. Families are provided with daily information about their child's intake and experiences with food and drink.</p> <p>Other sources of information for families can be found at</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrition Australia – www.nutritionaustralia.org • Fussy Eaters ECA Everyday Learning Series - http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/parent-resources/childrens-health-nutrition/ <p>Raising Children Network www.raisingchildren.net.au</p>
2.	<p>Food and water will be available at all times and emergency nutritious fruit/vegetable/multigrain crackers will always be available. Furniture and utensils will be age appropriate and developmentally suitable to encourage children to be positively involved in and enjoy food occasions. Setting up café style social spaces is encouraged. Sufficient spare water bottles and food containers will be maintained in a clean and hygienic manner for use when items are forgotten.</p>
3.	<p>Educators and others as directed will ensure annual updates are maintained on food safety, storage and handlings guidelines and procedures. http://www.imalert.com.au/foodsafety/training Procedures will be actively embedded in everyday experiences and routines. These will be adhered to at all times at the service and modelled to children and families;</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwashing. • Clean storage and eating environments. • Refrigeration cleanliness and temperatures maintained. • Adequate and age appropriate utensils. • Safety risk plans and procedures to minimise cross contamination, choking, medical reactions, hazards in food experiences and routines. • Supervision. • Accessibility strategies for all children to their food and drinks. • Local communication strategies for information sharing. • Medical and emergency treatment plans.

Strategies can include;

- Teach children about food and nutrition.
 - Food awareness activities from garden to table and a variety of cultures included in the teaching curriculum.
 - Children will be encouraged to get practical experience in food preparation.
 - Foods being eaten by the children will be discussed with them.
 - To provide an eating environment that assists the transmission of family and multicultural values.
 - Educators sit and engage with children unhurried at food time.
 - Special occasions may be celebrated with culturally appropriate foods or sometimes foods from the approved list with the approval of each parent. Foods of multiple ingredients or cooking process for sharing can be made entirely at the service in the community kitchen.
 - Families will be invited to at least one food occasion each year.
 - Food and beverage experiences provide opportunities for encouraging self-help, independence, social skills, learning and understanding.
4. Ensuring children with allergies/intolerances/dietary exclusions will have Action Plans developed in consultation with parents, staff (and medical professionals updated annually excluding cultural exclusions). This will be displayed and accessible at nominated positions within each service that is identified on the emergency plan for all workers. Products that give severe allergic reactions to any child or person in attendance will be wrapped and secured to be sent back home.
 5. Days when foods or products where known allergies/intolerances will not be accepted must be clearly visible and communicated to every parent/carer and regularly reviewed as new enrolments/diagnosis are advised.
 6. Providing nutrition information onto parents of children. It is important to establish links with family members to encourage parent participation in the services nutrition experiences. Parent's knowledge, beliefs and food preferences play a key role in establishing a child's eating pattern and behaviour.
 7. Information recognised by health and dental authorities on dental health and nutrition relating to different age groups of children will be promoted at the service in a variety of accessible and non-static methods. Health practices in the service will be evident.
 8. When food is prepared as part of the children's curriculum of experiences, the ingredients and preparation techniques used will be hygienic and safe and contribute to children's nutritional needs.
 9. Ensuring spaces and facilities allow and support for breastfeeding/formula preparation for infants.
 10. The regular review of practices and remedial actions are documented, communicated, monitored and reported.

