

# Food and Nutrition Policy

## *Food & Nutrition Policy*

### Policy Statement

The Nuriootpa Community Children's Centre is committed to ensuring children are provided with appropriate and nutritious food whilst in care and that healthy eating and food safety is encouraged and supported throughout the service program and practices. Staff will model healthy eating, good hygiene practices and present food in a safe manner to support the goals of the Food and Nutrition Policy. The Centre will include information on the Food and Nutrition policy as part of staff orientation. Parents will be provided with the Food and Nutrition Policy with their Centre handbook and are able to access the policy at any time in the policy folder displayed in the entrance to the Centre.

**The Nuriootpa Community Children's Centre is an "Allergy Aware" Centre. (See Allergy Aware Policy). It is crucial that any foods that contain nuts and whole eggs are avoided.**

### How the Policy will be implemented

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years. If new legal requirements or research findings are available, the policy will be reviewed sooner. Recommendations will be presented to the Governing Council and made available for staff/parent consultation for final determination. The Food and Nutrition Policy will be available from the Centre's Policy Folder, located in the front foyer.

### Policy Strategies

#### 1. Encourage and promote healthy food and drink

The Centre will:

- Provide clear information to families on recommended and non-recommended food and drinks for children's lunchboxes (refer to Healthy Lunchbox Guidelines).
- Ensure recommended and non-recommended food guidelines are consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines (<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>) and promote foods from the five food groups (Vegetables, breads and cereals, fruit, dairy and meat and meat alternatives) and discourage "discretionary" foods (eg lollies, chocolates, sweet biscuits, muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, chips, high fat crackers and corn chips).
- Provide feedback to parents of any eating concerns or if non-recommended food or drinks are packed. Eg through reminder notes in lunchboxes/ verbal feedback and/ or parent newsletters.
- Promote tap water and plain milk as suitable drinks for consumption in care.
- Ensure tap water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day.
- Provide opportunities to access food and drink at regular and predictable intervals.
- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special dietary needs and consult with families to determine specific food related requirements and develop individual management plans (see section below).

- Minimise the risk of choking through provision of guidelines for appropriate foods and supervision.
- Ensure that food is always available in case of an emergency.

## **2. Allow food provided for children to be stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and promote hygienic food practices.**

The Centre will:

- Ensure children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and single use or disposable towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks. Children's hand-washing practices are observed at all times.
- Provide facilities for the safe storage of food.
- Food will be stored and handled hygienically by staff and children to minimise food contamination.

## **3. Provide healthy learning experiences**

The Centre will:

- Foster awareness and understanding of healthy food and drink choices through including in the children's program a range of learning experiences encouraging children's healthy eating.
- Encourage children to participate in a variety of 'hands-on' food preparation experiences.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in discovery learning and discussion about healthy food and drink choices.

## **4. Provide a positive eating environment which reflects cultural and family values**

The Centre will:

- Ensure that educators sit with the children at meal and snack times to role model healthy food and drink choices and actively engage children in conversations about the food and drink provided.
- Provide positive comments about healthy eating and trying new foods
- Endeavour to recognise, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food as well as enjoying the social interactions with educators and other children.
- Encourage older toddlers and preschoolers to eat their food and drink independently to foster children's independence and self-esteem.
- Respect each child's appetite. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, educators do not insist he/she eats.
- Be patient with messy or slow eaters.
- Encourage children to try different / new foods but will not force them to eat.
- Not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.

## 5. Encourage and support breastfeeding

The service will:

- Apply current national infant feeding recommendations.
- Provide a suitable place within the service where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express breastmilk.
- Support mothers to continue breastfeeding until babies are at least 12 months of age while offering appropriate complementary foods from around 6 months of age.
- Ensure the safe handling of breastmilk and infant formula including transporting, storing, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle feeding.
- Where breastfeeding is discontinued before 12 months of age, a commercial infant formula should be provided.
- Always supervise babies while drinking and eating - ensuring safe bottle feeding and eating practices.

## 6. Ensure communication with families regarding healthy eating

The Centre will:

- Provide a copy of the Nutrition Policy to all families upon orientation at the service. Families will be provided with opportunities to contribute to the review and development of the policy.
- Ensure educators take time to discuss mealtimes with families and that families are regularly informed about the quantity and types of food their child is eating.
- Communicate regularly with families and provide information and advice on healthy eating, breastfeeding and appropriate food and drink to be included in children's lunchboxes. This information may be provided to families in a variety of ways including newsletters, during orientation, information sessions and informal discussion.

## Parent responsibilities:

The Centre asks that parents support the Food & Nutrition policy in the following ways:

1. Providing foods that are consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines (as outlined in the 'Healthy Lunchbox Guidelines')- including at least one piece of fruit (or vegetable) per day.
2. All products containing nuts (as a listed ingredient) and whole eggs are not to be brought to the Centre (**Also see the Centre's Allergy Aware Policy**)
3. Avoid sending "discretionary" foods (eg lollies, chocolates, sweet biscuits, chocolate covered muesli bars, breakfast bars, fruit filled bars, chips, high fat crackers and corn chips).
4. Water or plain milk/ breastmilk/ infant formula are the only acceptable drink choices
5. Foods to avoid to prevent choking **for Under 4 yr olds**
  - a. Avoid hard foods like raw carrot and apple- slice, grate, cook or mash to make safe
  - b. Avoid popcorn, nuts, corn chips or other similar foods.
  - c. Avoid foods that can break off into hard pieces

## Special Dietary Considerations

The special need of children with food allergies, food sensitivities or medical diets will be catered for in consultation with parents and the appropriate medical professionals.

### Centre Responsibilities

- Families will be informed about what dietary support can be provided upon enrolment.
- If the child has individual dietary needs, parents/carers will be asked to provide a health care plan, written by a relevant health professional e.g. doctor, paediatrician, specialist, dietitian. The care plan should include information about medical conditions (provided by a Doctor/ paediatrician/specialist) and any recommended emergency procedures, as well as information about nutrition intervention required (provided by a Dietitian).
- Special diets for cultural or religious reasons will be discussed and negotiated with parents/carers to the best of the Centre's ability.
- The health and safety of the child is foremost and any concerns about the child's dietary intake will be discussed with parents/carers.

### Steps to be taken if an allergy or food sensitivity is suspected:

- A food allergy should be confirmed by a specialist (e.g. Paediatrician or Immunologist) or a General Practitioner. A food intolerance should be confirmed by a Paediatrician, Immunologist or dietitian. The specialist should provide detailed information about the allergy or sensitivity and details of any emergency procedure required.
- A dietitian's input is strongly recommended. A dietitian can provide information about foods that may be eaten and foods to avoid for the period of time that the special diet is needed.
- All staff will be informed of any emergency procedure necessary for the child, and this procedure will be stored where appropriate.
- Parents/ caregivers must alert staff if there is a change to dietary requirements.

Next Review May 2024