

Early Childhood Services

Benchmarks for Healthy Eating and Oral Health



Healthy policies

1. A whole-service nutrition/healthy eating policy is in place.

- The policy addresses all aspects of food and drink within the service.
- The policy addresses breastfeeding.
- Educators, staff and families are involved in guiding healthy eating policy and practices.
- Educators, staff and families are provided with information about policy requirements.
- The diversity of the service and the community is considered when developing and implementing this policy.
- The policy aligns with the service's statement of philosophy and is cross-referenced with other relevant policies (e.g. oral health).
- The policy can stand-alone or be incorporated into a whole service health and wellbeing policy.

2. A whole-service oral health policy is in place.

- The policy addresses healthy food and drink, oral hygiene, preventive approaches and access to dental care.
- Educators, staff and families are involved in guiding oral health policy and practice.
- Educators, staff and families are provided with information about policy requirements.
- The diversity of the service and the community is considered when developing and implementing this policy.
- The policy aligns with the service's statement of philosophy and is cross-referenced with other relevant policies (e.g. healthy eating, safe environments).
- The policy can stand-alone or be incorporated into a whole service health and wellbeing policy.

3. The service has a staff health and wellbeing policy that supports healthy eating and oral health.

Healthy physical environment

4. The service promotes the consumption of fruit and vegetables and healthy food options in line with Australian Guidelines.

- Fruit and vegetables are included on menus every day.
- Strategies are in place to encourage families to provide lunch boxes, in line with the service's healthy eating policy.
- 'Sometimes' foods and drinks are not provided by the service.
- Cooking and food experiences promote fruit and vegetables, and healthy options.
- Healthy food options are encouraged for staff at meetings, professional learning events and in the staff room.
- The service seeks to ensure any sponsorship, advertisements or marketing of food and drinks are consistent with the service's healthy eating policy.

5. The service menu, if applicable, is assessed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) to ensure it meets Australian Guidelines.

6. Children are encouraged to taste a wide variety of foods with a range of flavours, colours, textures and aromas through menus and food experiences.

- Foods are provided that are culturally appropriate and varied.
- Foods and drinks meet the children's developmental needs.

7. Safe drinking water is available at the service.

- Tap water is available indoors and outdoors at all times and is accessible to children.
- Only water and/or plain milk are provided at meal and snack times.
- Sweetened drinks (e.g. juices, cordial and soft drinks) are discouraged from being sent from home.
- Children, particularly toddlers, are encouraged to drink water regularly.

8. Children are encouraged to undertake oral hygiene practices in the service, where appropriate.

Healthy social environment

9. The service provides a positive eating environment with relaxed, social and enjoyable experiences by:

- a) Encouraging independence at mealtimes.
- b) Educators/staff sitting and actively engaging with children as role models to create a social environment.
- c) Where possible, educators/staff are encouraged to share the same food as the children.
- d) Ensuring children are given plenty of time to eat and socialise.

10. Food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe or reward at any time.

11. Educators, staff and families recognise they are role models and are encouraged to bring foods and drinks that are in line with the service's healthy eating and oral health policies.

- a) Educators, staff and families are encouraged to foster healthy body image and enjoyment of eating.

Learning and skills

12. Opportunities to learn about food, healthy eating and oral health are embedded in the curriculum as recommended in the NQS, the EYLF, VEYLDF, and Australian Government Guidelines.

13. As active learners, children are involved in healthy food experiences through growing, cooking and shopping.

14. Educators are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote healthy eating and oral health.

Engaging young people, staff and families

15. Families, children, educators and staff are key partners in developing and supporting healthy eating and oral health initiatives.

- a) Families, educators and staff are provided with information, ideas and practical strategies on a regular basis to support healthy eating and oral health in the service and at home.
- b) The service engages children in healthy eating and oral health initiatives.
- c) The service draws on families' experiences and expertise to support healthy eating and oral health initiatives.
- d) Educators and staff are encouraged to develop competencies to facilitate engagement of families and children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Community partnerships

16. Educators and staff are encouraged to work with local health professionals, services and other organisations to increase their capacity to deliver and promote healthy eating and oral health initiatives.

- a) Links are established with Maternal and Child Health Services to promote key ages and stages mouth checks.
- b) Links are established with oral health services to promote access to dental checks and treatment.
- c) Links are established with local health professionals, services and organisations to support healthy eating and oral health initiatives.
- d) The service seeks to work with local businesses or agencies, where possible, to support children, families, educators and staff in their understanding of healthy eating and oral health.
- e) The service provides information to vulnerable families about local food availability as required.