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NUTRITION, FOOD, BEVERAGES AND DIETARY REQUIREMENTS POLICY

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

National Quality Standard (NQS)

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety		
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law Act 2010	
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
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"Given that children are increasingly spending long periods of time in centre-based care, early childhood educators can role model healthy eating and encourage young children to make healthier food choices". – Community Child Care Co-operative NSW.

Introduction

Woden Early Childhood Centre (WECC) recognises the importance of healthy eating to the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting the healthy food and drink choices of children in our care.

Children and adolescents should eat sufficient nutritious foods to grow and develop normally. They should be physically active every day, and their growth should be checked regularly. (Eat for Health – the Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013).

The 2007 *National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey* found that the dietary patterns of many Australian children are less than optimal with high consumption of salt and saturated fat, and low consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Being overweight greatly increases the risk of high blood pressure, muscle, bone and respiratory disorders and chronic disease including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some cancers, and reduces life expectancy. Being underweight also carries health risks. Overweight people, especially children and adolescents, can also face social discrimination, low self-esteem, poor body image and depression. Children who are overweight tend to become overweight adults, especially if their parents are overweight too".¹

Given that children are increasingly spending long periods of time in centre-based care, early childhood educators can role model healthy eating and encourage young children to make healthier food choices. This will help prevent weight problems in children, allowing children to thrive physically, socially and intellectually, and in turn contribute to the prevention of nutrition-related chronic diseases.

In addition to role modelling healthier food choices, WECC needs to be conscious and considerate of the increasing number of children with food allergies and intolerances and ensure that food practices and menu planning consider the individual needs of these children.

Scope

This policy applies to children, families, educators, staff and management of the Centre.

Goals

WECC has a responsibility to help children to develop good food practices and approaches, by working with families and educators.

WECC will:

- role model healthy eating and activity throughout the day to all children and families
- promote the six key Munch and Move² messages to promote healthy, active habits in children from a young age. These messages include:
 - encourage and support breastfeeding
 - choose water as a drink
 - eat more fruit and vegetables
 - choose healthier snacks

¹ https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/n55_australian_dietary_guidelines.pdf

² <http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au/campaigns-programs/about-munch-move.aspx>

- be active each day
- turn off the television and computer and get active
- develop menus in accordance with the *Australian Government Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood Settings*³, and the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*⁴
- support families in educating their children about healthier food choices

Strategies

All food prepared by the Centre or families will endeavour to be consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and provide children with 50 per cent of the recommended dietary intake for all nutrients. Food will be served at various times throughout the day to cater for all children's nutritional needs.

Mealtimes will reflect a relaxed and pleasant environment where educators engage in meaningful conversations with children. When possible, educators will role model healthy eating behaviour, by sharing a small amount of the food on offer with the children. This assists in creating a positive and enjoyable eating environment.

Food will be prepared in accordance with the Food Safety Program. All kitchens and food preparation areas shall comply with Food Standards Australia and New Zealand.

Professional development of WECC educators

All educators will have access to resources or the opportunity to attend professional development training on nutrition and the importance of physically active play. An agreed number of educators will undertake professional development in allergies and anaphylaxis. Please see the *Anaphylaxis and Allergy policies*.

All educators will have access to the *Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings*. Changes to these guidelines will be discussed at staff meetings.

Educators employed by WECC to prepare meals will be qualified through an approved training course on food handling, nutrition and hygiene, and be provided with ongoing professional development opportunities to refresh their knowledge of children's dietary needs, food handling and hygiene procedures.

Provision of food and drinks at WECC

The Nominated Supervisor or Director will ensure that:

- parents of children enrolled at WECC provide details of any known food intolerances, allergies or preferences. These details will be readily accessible to room educators and educators who prepare food
- in accordance with the *Medical Conditions* policy, WECC remains a nut-free Centre and all dietary requirements relating to medical conditions are adhered to. Families will be advised of this policy at the time of enrolment and through visible signage throughout the Centre or via other mediums (i.e. emails)
- all children have access to safe drinking water at all times
- all children are offered food and beverages appropriate to the needs of each child on a regular basis throughout the day
- menu planning ensures all food and beverages provided are nutritious and adequate in quantity, and accommodates each child's individual dietary requirements, growth and development needs and any specific cultural, religious or health requirements
 - WECC's menu planning takes active measures to:

³ <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-early-childhood-nutrition-index>

⁴ http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/n34.pdf

- offer a diverse range of foods which reflect the cultural backgrounds of families and the local community
- avoid foods which unnecessarily contain food chemicals (such as colourings, flavours), and instead choose a healthier alternative if one is available and accessible
- avoid 'treats' which are considered junk food in favour of healthy snacks, except for special occasions such as birthday cake
- the menu is displayed in a prominent position in the foyer and accurately describes the food and beverages provided by WECC each day
- educators are aware of the need to implement adequate health and hygiene practices and use safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risks to children

Educators will ensure that:

- healthy eating is promoted through role modelling and eating with the children
- children are encouraged to make healthy food choices
- all mealtimes are positive, relaxed and social
- children are encouraged to try new foods, and their food likes, and dislikes are respected
- children are positively involved at mealtimes
- they implement adequate health and hygiene practices and use safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risk to children
- as per the *Medical Conditions* policy, WECC remains a nut-free Centre and dietary requirements relating to medical conditions are adhered to

Encourage and support breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods

WECC will:

- provide a suitable place within the Centre where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express breast milk
- 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 breast milk and infant formula including transporting, storing, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle feeding. See *Bottle Safety and Preparation* policy
- in consultation with families, offer cooled pre-boiled water as an additional drink from around 6 months of age
- ensure that the introduction of solids to babies and toddlers will be done in consultation with families and in line with recognised dietary guidelines
- ensure appropriate foods (type and texture) are introduced around 6 months of age
- adjust the texture of foods offered between 6 and 12 months of age to match the baby's developmental stage
- offer babies a variety of foods, from all the food groups
- always supervise babies while drinking and eating, ensuring safe bottle-feeding and eating practices at all times

Promote healthy food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents

WECC will:

- provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods for meals and snacks including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products, lean meats and alternatives

- plan and display the Centre menu (at least one week at a time) that is based on sound menu planning principles and meets the daily nutritional needs of children whilst in care
- plan healthy snacks on the menu to complement what is served at mealtimes and ensure the snacks are substantial enough to meet the energy and nutrient needs of children
- vary the meals and snacks on the menu to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas

The Nominated Supervisor, Director or Educators will:

- ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment
- be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special diets and consult with families to develop individual management plans
- ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking
- ensure children remain seated while eating and drinking
- ensure children are always supervised while eating and drinking
- encourage and provide opportunities for cooking. Staff and educators will undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition
- ensure the weekly menu is displayed in an accessible and prominent area for parents to view
- display up-to-date nutritional information for families
- ensure the weekly menu is accurate and describes the food and beverages provided each day of the week
- ensure food is presented attractively
- ensure infants are fed individually by educators, if required
- ensure age and developmentally appropriate utensils and furniture are provided for each child.
- not allow food to be used as a form of punishment or to be used as a reward or bribe
- not allow children to be force-fed
- not require children to eat food they do not like or more than they want to eat
- encourage toddlers to be independent and develop social skills at meal times
- establish healthy eating habits in the children by incorporating nutritional information into our program
- talk to families about their child's food intake and voice any concerns about their child's eating
- encourage parents to the best of our ability to continue our healthy eating message in their homes
- ensure fridge and freezer temperatures are taken daily in the kitchen, working in compliance with the National Food Authority

Storing, preparing and serving food in a hygienic manner and promoting hygienic food practices

WECC will:

- ensure gloves or food tongs are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods
- ensure children and educators wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and single use or disposable towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks
- ensure food is stored and served at safe temperatures, i.e. below 5°C or above 60°C
- ensure separate cutting boards are used for raw meat and chicken and fruit and vegetables and utensils, and hands are washed before touching other foods
- discourage children from handling other children's food and utensils
- ensure food-handling educators attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information onto the other educators

Creating a positive learning environment

WECC 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
- 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 enjoy the social interactions with educators and other children
- encourage older toddlers and preschool children to assist to set and clear the table and serve their own food and drink, providing opportunities for them to develop independence and self-esteem
- respect each child's appetite. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, do not insist he/she eats
- be patient with messy or slow eaters
- encourage children to try different foods but not force them to eat
- not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes

WECC program

WECC will:

- foster awareness and understanding of healthy food and drink choices through inclusion in the children's program and via a range of learning experiences that encourage 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
- embed the importance of healthy eating and physical activity in everyday activities and experiences

Educators will engage in learning experiences that are fun and enjoyable and incorporate key messages around healthy eating. Implemented learning experiences will be guided by the EYLF principles and incorporate the child's identity.

Communicating with families

WECC will:

- provide a copy of the Nutrition Policy to all families upon orientation at WECC
- provide families with opportunities to contribute to the review and development of the policy
- request that details of any food allergies or intolerances or specific dietary requirements be provided to the Centre, and work in partnership with families to develop an appropriate response so that children's individual dietary needs are met
- communicate regularly with families about food and nutrition related experiences within the Centre and provide up to date information to assist families to provide healthy food choices at home, including appropriate food and drink to be included in children's lunchboxes. This information may be provided to families in a variety of ways including factsheets, newsletters, during orientation, information sessions and informal discussion

All educators will support families' choices regarding infant feeding, including breastfeeding and bottle feedings. WECC will provide families with up to date information on dietary requirements of young children to ensure optimal growth and development and provide families with opportunities to discuss ways to maximise the health

and wellbeing of their child/ren. WECC will provide families with daily information about their child's intake of food and drinks throughout the day.

Families will be provided with current information about recommended guidelines around dietary requirements, screen time and physical activity.

Evaluation

WECC will offer appropriate and healthy food and beverages to all children. All meal times will be relaxed and educators will model healthy eating to children.

Related policies /documents

- *Allergies*
- *Anaphylaxis management*
- *Bottle safety and preparation*
- *Medical conditions*

Sources and references

- Early Years Learning Framework
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand
- 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 NHMRC
- Food Safety Standards for Australia 2001
- Food Standards Australia and New Zealand Act 1991
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand Regulations 1994
- Food Act 2003
- Food Regulation 2004
- NSW Food Authority
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
- Dental Association Australia
- Australian Breast-Feeding Association Guidelines
- Munch and Move
- Revised National Quality Standards

Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements Policy

Policy Reviewed	October 2022	Ratified Date	Next Ratified Date
Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional information added to the education and care services national regulations • Minor wording changes • Sources and references checked • Change in format • Addition of modification table 	Oct 2022	Oct 2025
Policy Reviewed	August 2019	Ratified Date	Next Ratified Date
Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing policy 	Aug 2019	Aug 2021
Policy Reviewed	March 2018	Ratified Date	Next Ratified Date
Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing policy 	Mar 2018	Mar 2020
Policy Reviewed	June 2013	Ratified Date	Next Ratified Date
Modifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing policy 	Jun 2013	Jun 2015

Authorisation

Paul Halloran
President
2017-18 WECC Management Committee