

NUTRITION, MEALTIME AND FOOD SAFETY POLICY

As per *Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations*, our Service has a nutritional and food safety policy and procedures in place to ensure quality practices relating to nutrition, food and beverages and dietary requirements are followed at all times.

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	
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
160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and Procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of First Aid Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy Enrolment Policy Excursions / Incursions Policy	Governance Policy Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Medical Conditions Policy
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PURPOSE

For children to thrive and develop to their full potential they need access to safe drinking water and food and beverages that are nutritious, adequate in quantity, offered regularly and respectful of cultural, religious and dietary requirements. McKay Children's Centre is committed to fostering supportive food environments that help children to learn to like all kinds of foods and feel good about their body. We recognise the powerful role we play in helping children have a lifelong positive relationship with food. This policy is in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations and the National Quality Standards. Healthy eating curriculum materials used within programs include Right Bite, Start Rite Eat Right and Eat a Rainbow and we are guided by Dr Kyla's Smith's Toddler Mealtimes information and resources. This policy has been developed under the guidance of Dr Kyla to ensure we are maintaining best practice in line with current research.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, approved provider, nominated supervisor, visitors, and management of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our Service has a responsibility to help children to develop good food practices and approaches, by working with families and educators. All staff involved in the stages of food handling have the skills and knowledge to ensure food safety is a priority.

Lunchboxes & Drink Bottles

- McKay Children's Centre is a lunchbox centre and therefore Parents/Guardians will provide their children with enough food for a full day or half-day session at McKay. We have three routine eating opportunities during the day, but take a flexible approach in meeting all children's needs.
- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to provide a lunchbox containing a range of core foods including grains, fruit, vegetables, dairy and other protein foods (like meat, chicken, fish, beans, tofu and seeds).
- Choking Hazards: Certain foods pose a choking risk and should not be packed for children attending our childcare or Kindy programs. These include hard, raw vegetables and fruits like carrot sticks, whole grapes, or cherry tomatoes, as well as chicken or fish with bones, popcorn, rollups and frankfurts. To ensure safety, hard or raw fruits and vegetables should be thinly sliced, grated, or cooked for children in our care.
- Packages Snacks with Age Warnings: Some snacks, such as Tiny Teddy biscuits, come with packaging warnings indicating they are not recommended for children under 3 years due to risk of choking. While we trust families to make informed choices about their child's lunchbox contents, educators are required to remove any foods that arrive with a warning label indicating they are unsuitable for the child's age. For example, if a 2-year-old has a packet of Tiny Teddies labelled as not recommended for children under 3, educators will need to remove it from their lunchbox.
- Educators trust parents to supply appropriate foods for their children, considering their appetite, individual needs and preferences. Educators may offer the child emergency food from the Centre if required.
- Parents/Guardian will provide a drink bottle filled with water at the start of their child's day at McKay. McKay educators will refill children's water bottles as required with filtered water purchased by the Centre. We encourage water as a preferred drink at the centre.
- Lunchboxes and drink bottles need to be regularly cleaned by parents/guardians to promote safe hygiene practices for their child but also within shared storage situations
- If dairy milk is provided by parents/guardians, the Centre recommends full cream milk for children younger than 2 years of age and either full cream or reduced fat milk for children older than 2 years old. Skim milk is not recommended.

- Penola OSHC provides afternoon fruit for children, as well as other cooking experiences. OSHC children are able to eat from their lunchbox if they are still hungry.
- Lunchboxes for children who use the kindy room and Penola OSHC are not able to be refrigerated. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to use insulated cooler bags or lunchboxes with freezer blocks to ensure food safety.
- Water bottles for childcare children are placed in insulated boxes in the appropriate room to allow ease of access inside and outside.

Food Storage and Preparation

- Lunchboxes for childcare children who attend programs in the childcare room are refrigerated in the McKay kitchen
- McKay and Penola OSHC promote environmentally sustainable practices so please limit food packaging. Lunch boxes with compartments are ideal to limit rubbish
- Foods offered to children will be safe, fresh and appropriately prepared, hand washing and hygiene routines will be observed when adults and children are handling foods (See HSW-6 Hygiene Practices Policy and HSW-4 Food Safety Policy).

Feeding Practises for Babies 0-12 months

- McKay supports breast milk provision and breastfeeding mothers. Breastfeeding mothers are encouraged to visit McKay to feed their baby at all times suitable to them and their baby (Refer HSW-5 Food Safety, Handling, Preparing and Storage Policy).
- Both breast milk and prepared formula milk are to be transported to childcare under insulation to keep them cool. The bottles are to be placed at the back of the fridge on arrival.
- Recommended procedures for storing, thawing and warming of breast milk and infant formula is displayed in the kitchen next to the fridge.

Allergies and Intolerances

- The management of allergies, food intolerances and special dietary requirements will be a shared responsibility of parents/guardians and educators. Individual management plans will be drawn up based on written evidence and guidelines from relevant health professionals. Management plans will be adhered to unless written confirmation is received. Management plans will be reviewed regularly and children with management plans will be clearly identified on the side of the fridge in the McKay kitchen and the Penola OSHC room. Management plans will also be kept in enrolment records and/or medication folders relevant to the service.
- Where a child has a known allergy or intolerance, it will be recorded on the mauve coloured form that accompanies the enrolment pack. The Director, Assistant Director or Nominated Supervisor will discuss the allergy or intolerance on induction of the family into the Centre and all staff will be made aware.
- McKay CC and Penola OSHC are allergy aware. We take a considered approach towards managing allergies at the centre and try to avoid blanket bans on food where possible.

Mealtimes

- Mealtimes will be pleasurable, unhurried and social experiences that are respectful and accepting of cultural and religious practices. Eating time will be separate to play time so children have a chance to sit with their peers and learn. Educators will participate in the meal break by eating lunch/morning tea with the children, where possible.

- Children will be required to sit down whilst eating and drinking and will be appropriately supervised.
- Children will be empowered to learn and develop independence at meal times through preparation, self-service and cleaning up. These experiences promote literacy, numeracy learning as well as the development of dispositions such as confidence, purposefulness and persistence.

Educator roles at mealtimes

- Educators will trust parents to supply appropriate foods for their children and trust children to eat as much as they need to be full, in whatever order they choose.
- Educators will follow an evidence-based model of childhood feeding (Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding) and refrain from restricting or encouraging any foods
- Educators will never comment on the contents of a child's lunchbox in their presence and will speak neutrally about food rather than positively or negatively
- Educators will align all health messages to the WHO definitions and avoid black and white discussions of food and nutrition (like healthy/unhealthy) in line with the WHO definition of Health. (The World Health Organisation (1946, 2020) defines health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity").

Birthday Celebrations

- McKay and Penola OSHC encourage the celebration of birthdays, if this fits within the family culture. Birthday cakes, whether baked at home or purchased need a list of ingredients and use by date. Single patty cakes are preferable.

Education

- Educators will promote and role model healthy eating practices by helping children learn about the growing, harvesting and eating of vegetables and fruits. Educators will allow children to participate in the preparation of foods and opportunities to explore a variety of fresh foods, as they feel able.
- Resources (for educators, parents/guardians and children) will be provided to support nutrition, education and professional development
- Cooking experiences are a part of the childcare, kindy, and OSHC programs and children will be taught safe food handling practices within this setting

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/ MANAGEMENT/ NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

- ensure educators and staff are aware of their responsibilities and obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations in relation to this policy and relevant procedures to ensure awareness of safe food handling practices.
- ensure new staff and educators are aware of food practices and procedures as outlined in this policy during induction and orientation
- ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day
- ensure food and beverages are offered to children regularly during the day
- ensure enrolment forms include information relating to child's food preferences, allergies, intolerances, cultural or religious considerations or medical conditions which involve food or food practices
- consult with families on enrolment to develop individual management plans, including completing Risk Minimisation Plans for children with medical conditions involving food allergies, food intolerances and special dietary requirements as per *Medical Conditions Policy*

- ensure children's individual dietary requirements as per enrolment information or medical condition plans are communicated to all staff and food handlers
- ensure any changes to children's individual dietary requirements are recorded and communicated to all staff and food handlers
- keep an up-to-date *Food Safety Certificate Register* to provide evidence of safe food handling training for all food handlers
- encourage and provide opportunities for staff and educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood food practices

EDUCATORS/ FOOD HANDLERS 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 dietary requirements and consult with families and management to ensure individual management plans are developed and implemented, including completing Risk Minimisation Plans for children with medical conditions involving food as per *Medical Conditions Policy*
- ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking
- ensure all children remain seated while eating and drinking
- ensure all children are always supervised whilst eating and drinking
- participate in regular professional development to maintain and enhance knowledge about early childhood food practices
- participate in safe food handling training on a regular basis, including the completion of an appropriate Food Safety and Food Hygiene Certificate
- consider the needs of various age groups at the service- meal times may be offered progressively or at different time
- ensure age and developmentally appropriately 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
- encourage toddlers to be independent and develop social skills at mealtimes
- talk to families about their child's food intake and voice any concerns about their child's eating
- ensure pets or animals are not present within the kitchen or food preparation areas

FOOD HYGIENE

Food poisoning is caused by bacteria, viruses, or other toxins being present in food and can cause extremely unpleasant symptoms such as diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and fevers. Children under five years of age are considered a high-risk group as their immune systems are still developing and they produce less of the stomach acid required to kill harmful bacteria than older children or adults (Foodsafety.gov. 2019).

Our Service will strictly adhere to food hygiene standards to prevent the risk of food poisoning.

BUYING AND TRANSPORTING FOOD

Our Service will:

- always check labels for the 'use by' and 'best before' dates, understanding that 'use by' dates apply to perishable foods that could potentially cause food poisoning if out of date, whilst 'best before' dates refer to food items with long shelf life but quality could be compromised
- avoid buying food items in damaged, swollen, leaking or dented packaging
- always check eggs within cartons: Never buy dirty or cracked eggs
- never buy any food item if unsure about its quality
- ensure fresh meat, chicken, or fish products cannot leak on to other food items

STORING FOOD

Our Service will:

- ensure the refrigerator and freezer has a thermometer and that the refrigerator is maintained at 5 °C or below and the freezer is maintained at -17 °C or below
- store raw foods below cooked foods in the refrigerator to avoid cross contamination by foods dripping onto other foods
- ensure fresh meat is not stored in the fridge for more than 3 days
- ensure that all foods stored in the refrigerator are stored in strong food-safe containers with either a tight-fitting lid, or tightly applied plastic wrap or foil
- ensure that all foods not stored in their original packaging are labelled with:
 - the name of the food
 - the 'use by' date
 - the date the food was opened
 - details of any allergens present in the food
- ensure all bottles and jars are refrigerated after opening
- place 'left-over' hot food in an appropriate sealed container in the refrigerator as soon as the steam has stopped rising. Food can be cooled quickly to this point by placing in smaller quantities in shallow containers, reducing the amount of time sitting in the 'danger zone'.
- store dry foods in labelled and sealed, air-tight containers if not in original packaging
- store bulk dry foods only in food-safe and airtight containers
- use the FIFO (first in, first out) rule for all foods (dry, chilled, and frozen) to ensure rotation of stock so that older stock is used first
- store cleaning supplies and chemicals separate to food items
- ensure breastmilk or infant formula is stored within the main section of the fridge and clearly labelled with the child's name and date of preparation.

PREPARING AND SERVING FOOD

Our Service will:

- ensure that all cooked food is cooked through and reaches 75°C
- ensure that cooked food is served promptly, or
- ensure that prepared cold food is stored in the refrigerator maintained at below 5°C until ready to serve
- discard any cooked food that has been left in the 'danger zone' for two or more hours. Do not reheat.
- reheat cooked food (if required, for example for a child who was sleeping at lunch time) to a temperature of 70°C (but only ever reheat **once**. Discard if the food is not eaten after being reheated).
- keep cooked and ready-to-eat foods separate from raw foods
- ensure foods are defrosted in the fridge or microwave
- wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly under clean running water before preparation
- ensure unused washed fruit or vegetables are thoroughly dry before returning to storage
- ensure food that has been dropped on the floor is immediately discarded
- thoroughly clean kitchen utensils and equipment between using with different foods and/or between different tasks
- ensure that gloves are changed between handling different foods or changing tasks
- ensure that staff preparing food for children with food allergies or intolerances are proficient at reading ingredient labels
- ensure all educators and staff are aware of children who have severe allergic reactions to certain foods as per ASCIA Action Plans
- ensure that children with food allergies and/or intolerances are served their meals and snacks individually on an easily identifiable plate (e.g., different colour), and that food is securely covered with plastic wrap until received by the child to prevent possible cross-contamination.
- ensure that unwell staff do not handle food
- ensure left-over food is stored immediately in the fridge or thrown away

- ensure the safe handling of breastmilk, including during transportation, storage, thawing, warming and during preparation

CLEANING

Our Service will:

- ensure that food preparation areas and surfaces are cleaned both before, after, and during any food preparation
- ensure that all cooking and serving utensils are cleaned and sanitised before use
- ensure that all dishwashing sponges, brushes, and scourers are cleaned after each use and allowed to air dry or placed in the dishwasher
- ensure the food storage area is clean, ventilated, dry, pest free, and not in direct sunlight
- ensure refrigerators and freezers are cleaned regularly and door seals checked and replaced if not in good repair
- prevent pest infestations by cleaning spills as quickly as possible and ensuring rubbish and food scraps are disposed of frequently
- ensure that floor mops are thoroughly cleaned and air dried after each use
- replace any cleaning equipment that shows signs of wear or permanent soiling.

PERSONAL HYGIENE FOR FOOD HANDLERS

Our Service will ensure:

- strict hand-washing hygiene is adhered to, including washing hands each time they return to the kitchen before continuing with food preparation duties
- wounds or cuts are covered with a brightly coloured, waterproof dressing (that will easily be seen if it falls off), and gloves will be worn over any dressings
- staff who are not well will not prepare or handle food.

ALL STAFF HANDLING FOOD WILL:

- ensure children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, running water, and single use disposable towels or individual hand towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks
- ensure gloves (and food tongs) are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- ensure food is stored and served at safe temperatures (below 5°C or above 60°C), with consideration to the safe eating temperature requirements of children
- ensure separate cutting boards are used for raw meat and chicken, 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 staff members attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information on to the rest of the staff.

COOKING WITH CHILDREN

Cooking is a great, fun activity and provides opportunities for children to be exposed to new foods, sharing of recipes and cooking skills. On these occasions participating educators will be vigilant to ensure that the experience remains safe, and relevant food hygiene practices are adhered to.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

Our Service will:

- provide a copy of the *Nutrition, Mealtime and Food Safety Policy* to all families upon orientation at the Service
- provide opportunities for families 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 Service 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 Service and provide up to date information to assist families to provide healthy food choices at home

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Nutrition, Mealtime and Food Safety Policy* will be reviewed every 2 years in consultation with children, families, staff, educators and management.

SOURCE

Australian Breast-Feeding Association Guidelines: <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/>
 Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
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 NSW Food Authority: <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/>
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 Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).
 The Australian Dental Association: <https://www.ada.org.au/Home>
 The Department of Health. Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood – Staff/Carers Book: https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource-collection?utm_source=health.gov.au&utm_medium=callout-auto-custom&utm_campaign=digital_transformation
 Victoria State Government Education and Training Nutrition Australia *Healthy eating in the National Quality Standard A guide for early childhood education and care services*
Work Health and Safety Act 2011
Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011.

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Governing Council and Staff		
POLICY REVIEWED	September 2024	NEXT REVIEW DATE	September 2026

VERSION	Amendment made June 2025 to clarify age recommendations
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