



## Healthy Eating, Oral Health, and Active Play Policy

### Mandatory – Quality Area 2

#### Purpose

This policy will provide guidelines for healthy eating, oral health and active play at the kindergarten and highlight to families and the community the importance of encouraging healthy eating, oral health and active play habits in preschool children

#### POLICY STATEMENT

##### Values

Shine Bright EYM is committed to:

- Promoting and educating children and their parents/guardians about the importance of drinking water, healthy eating, oral health and active play.
- Educators, staff, children and families are key partners in developing and supporting healthy eating, oral health and active play initiatives in the service.
- Promoting and encouraging healthy eating choices in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and limiting of “sometimes” foods brought to the centre or provided by the centre.
- Providing positive meal environments that are culturally appropriate, relaxed, social and enjoyable and provide opportunities for social learning and positive interaction.
- Ensuring that food and drink items provided by the service and offered as fundraisers are consistent with national and state guidelines and recommendations.
- Ensuring any sponsorship, advertisements or marketing of food and drinks are consistent with this policy.
- Ensuring that a healthy body image and an enjoyment of eating are fostered
- Planning a range of active play experiences for both indoor and outdoor environments during kindergarten sessions and all children are encouraged to participate in these.
- Ensuring that all staff members actively promote key elements of the *Healthy Eating, Oral Health and Active Play Policy* including providing age appropriate traffic education and encouraging the importance of limiting ‘screen time’.
- Providing leadership and role modelling promoting drinking water, healthy eating, oral health and active play experiences within the kindergarten environment and wider community.
- Ensuring that children as active learners are involved in planning for healthy food and active play experiences.
- Providing resources and professional development opportunities for educators and staff to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote healthy eating, oral health and active play. Providing ongoing assistance to families to help establish and maintain healthy eating and oral health habits and a more active lifestyle through our newsletters, pamphlets/brochures etc.

- Ensuring that healthy lifestyle messages are encompassed within the kindergarten program to ensure sustainability.
- Ensuring adequate health and hygiene procedures, including safe practices for handling, preparing, storing and serving food.
- Ensuring that diversity and cultural practices are considered when implementing healthy eating, oral health and physical activity practices.

## **SCOPE**

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, staff, students on placement, volunteers, families, parents/guardians, children and others attending the program and activities of the service.

## **BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION**

### **Background**

There are many benefits to promoting a healthy lifestyle in early childhood education and care settings, including the positive impact this has on each child's learning and development. Being made aware of positive eating and oral health behaviour and the importance of physical activity from an early age can instil good habits that will remain throughout a person's life. Educators/staff are well placed to build this awareness among children and their families, while respecting lifestyle choices, and cultural and religious values.

The foods we eat provide our body with the nutrients we need to stay healthy. Good nutrition is the balanced eating of a variety of foods, and is especially important for children as they require a large amount of nutrients for growth and development. Research has shown that, when offered a variety of healthy foods, children can and do make good choices. It is also important to provide preschool children with a good foundation in healthy eating, as most children have formed lifelong eating habits before they reach school age. Education and care settings provide many opportunities for children to experience a range of healthy food, and to learn about food choices from educators and other children (*Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, p30 – refer to Sources).

Oral health is essential for children's overall health and wellbeing. Oral diseases can negatively affect individuals through pain, discomfort, general health and quality of life. The main oral health condition experienced by children is tooth decay, affecting over half of all Australian children, making it five times more prevalent than asthma. Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem despite being preventable.

Active play (play that involves using the large muscles in the body) develops a strong and healthy body, builds motor and co-ordination skills, creates a sense of wellbeing and helps protect from disease. Active play is about moving, being and doing.

A strong sense of health and wellbeing, supported by good nutrition, oral health and an active lifestyle, can provide children with confidence, energy and optimism that will contribute to their ability to concentrate, co-operate and learn (*Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, p30 – refer to Sources). Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, oral health and active play, links directly to Outcome 3 in both the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework* (refer to Sources).

The Australian Government has produced guidelines, recommendations and resources for healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood settings, including the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Australian Dietary Guidelines 2013* and the *Infant Feeding Guidelines 2012* (refer to *Resources*) and the *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood* resources (refer to *Resources*) and the National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0-5 Years (see appendix 1). Practical, healthy eating advice is also available to early childhood services and schools via a telephone advice line: the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS – refer to *Sources*), run by Nutrition Australia. Early childhood education and care services can also register for the *Achievement Program* (refer to *Sources*). This initiative is designed to create safe, healthy and supportive environments for learning, by promoting physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

### Progressive meal times

In recognising children as active participants in their own learning, children should be encouraged to make meaningful decisions about elements of their own education and care. Incorporating progressive meal times into the educational program allows children to choose to eat when they are hungry, rather than according to a timetable. Children can gather in small groups to enjoy meals together, without interrupting the needs and play of others. This also encourages quieter, more social and meaningful interactions at meal times and allows for a smoother flow throughout the day. Children can make decisions based on their own needs, and can be supported to access food and water throughout the day by educators/staff, who actively participate in meal times.

A decision with respect to incorporating progressive meal times into the educational program must take into account the needs of all children at the service, particularly children with specific medical conditions such as diabetes. The National Regulations require services to ensure that children with medical conditions are able to participate fully in the educational program, and are not discriminated against in any way.

## DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

**Active play:** Large muscle-based activities that is essential for a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth and development.

- Child-initiated active play is developed by the child through exploration of the outdoor environment, equipment and games.
- Adult-guided active play encourages children's physical development through promoting movement skills in a non-competitive environment.
- Physical activity includes sport, incidental exercise and many forms of recreation.

**Adequate supervision:** (In relation to this policy) supervision entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children

- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

**Healthy eating:** Describes eating patterns that provide all the recommended nutrients for growth and development, and good health and wellbeing, now and in the future. It also refers to preparing, serving and eating food in a way that recognises its importance as a social and cultural activity.

**Nutrition:** The process of providing or receiving nourishing substances.

**Oral health:** The absence of active disease in the mouth. Oral health is fundamental to overall health, wellbeing and quality of life. A healthy mouth enables people to eat, speak and socialise without pain, discomfort or embarrassment.

**'Sometimes' foods and drinks:** Food and drink items that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and that contain minimal vitamins, minerals or fibre.

**'Everyday' foods and drinks:** Are suitable for everyday consumption, such as grains, vegetables, fruits and yoghurt.

## PROCEDURES

### Healthy drink choices

- Parents may be asked to provide their children with fresh drinking water in a named water container.
- Tap water and plain milk will be the preferred drink consumed by the children at kindergarten. See Appendix 3 for practice recommendations to ensure quality tap water.
- Tap water will be available for the children to consume at all times during indoor and outdoor activities.

### Healthy snacks and lunch

- The children will be introduced to the concepts of 'everyday' foods and 'sometimes' foods during healthy eating discussions as part of the kindergarten program.
- As active learners children are engaged in growing, shopping and cooking
- Parents are encouraged to supply healthy snacks and lunch-box choices including fruit and/or vegetables for their children in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines.
- A copy of this policy, information about healthy food choices and suggestions for snacks and lunches will be provided to all families in our Shine Bright EYM policy book, visual displays and newsletters.
- Assistance by educators and parent helpers may be provided with cutting or peeling of fruits or vegetables.
- ensuring that staff and educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and professional development

## **Oral health**

- Oral health practices from diverse cultural backgrounds and traditional beliefs are respected within this service.
- Staff will talk to children about age appropriate tooth brushing and why this is important
- Children will have the opportunity to learn about and develop skills for oral health through the educational program.
- Provide families and children with information on oral hygiene and how and where to access public dental services.
- Educators are supported to access a range of resources to promote oral health initiatives for children.

## **Meal times and eating environments**

- Children will be directed to wash their hands before they eat or drink.
- Healthy food choices will be available when celebrations or special occasions occur – such as Mother’s Day morning teas, for example. Families are encouraged to provide healthy food options.
- Children may be given opportunities to taste and experience new foods.
- Children are encouraged to be independent in opening snack and lunch boxes, unwrapping contents, accessing and filling water bottles
- Opportunities may be also made available for children to participate in meal preparation, serving food and setting and cleaning tables and special occasions.
- Where possible, adults (educators and helpers) will sit with the children when they are eating and drinking for role modelling of acceptable social behaviour at snack and meal times, for safety, learning and socialisation.
- Suitable eating arrangements are provided for children at the centre. Children will be asked to sit when they eat and drink.
- At snack and lunch times children should be able to eat and drink without feeling hurried.
- Children with special dietary requirements whether cultural, religious or allergy, will be catered for. Parents of these children must notify staff by including this information on their child’s enrolment record and discussing the details with staff.
- Where children have food allergies, parents must provide a management plan.
- Food will not be used as a reward, incentive or for comfort (more appropriate alternatives will be offered – such as praise and encouragement).
- Food and tap water will be offered to children at frequent and regular intervals.
- Cleanliness is to be observed where food and beverages are stored, handled and prepared on the premises. Food and beverages intended for consumption are to be protected at all times from contamination.
- Promotes that breastfeeding is welcome at the service
- Best practices are followed in relation to bottle feeding and sipper cups as outlined in the NHMRC infant feeding guidelines.

## **Limit ‘sometimes foods’ and drinks**

- The children will be introduced to the concepts of ‘everyday’ foods and ‘sometimes’ foods during healthy eating discussions as part of the kindergarten program. They will be encouraged to bring healthy ‘everyday’ foods to eat at kinder and to leave their ‘sometimes’ foods at home.

- Tap water is the drink of choice at kindergarten. Sweetened drinks such as juices, soft drinks, flavoured milks and cordial are discouraged from being brought and are not provided
- Foods that are high in sugars, fats, salt, preservatives, colours or flavourings are discouraged from snack and lunch boxes.
- Parents are encouraged not to include 'sometimes' foods such as chips, chocolates, lollies, muesli and fruit bars for children's lunches and snacks. Parents are encouraged to provide healthy options such as a healthy sandwich, natural or fruit yoghurt, fruit and vegetables in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

### **Active play environment**

Shine Bright EYM centres have daily adult guided and child initiated active play as a significant component of the program plan.

- All children will be encouraged to participate in a range of active play experiences.
- The educators will ensure that a variety of active play experiences that cater for a range of abilities are planned.
- Children are not sedentary or inactive for more than one hour at a time, with a exception of sleeping.

These may include:

- Activities planned for both indoor and outdoor play spaces;
- Adult-guided/led activity is planned and may include a creative dance/drama session, active games, circuits or obstacle courses actively led by an educator. This is about the educator being intentionally engaged with the children (large/small groups or individually)
- Child initiated active play such as building, climbing, obstacle courses, ball skills, digging, running, jumping etc. individually or in small groups as chosen by the children.
- The child leads child-initiated active play and they decide how, what and where the game or activity will take place. Encouraging children to play freely and explore their environment supports children to learn to manage new tasks and to reach the next level of exploration.
- Educators role model being physically active and are engaged in children's active play
- In adverse weather conditions, outdoor playing time will be substituted with equivalent indoor activities.
- Information and guidelines about active play and physical activity will be provided to families through newsletters, pamphlets etc.

### **Screen time**

- There is limited screen time at Shine Bright EYM centres. Screen time includes TV, DVD, video, electronic games and computers. Educators are engaged with children as they participate in screen- based experiences.
- Parents are encouraged to filter and limit their child's screen time at home.
- Information about the impact of too much, or inappropriate, screen time on young children's development will be provided to families through newsletters, pamphlets etc.
- Screen based activities do not exceed the recommendations in the Australian 24-hour Movement Guidelines for Early Years

### **Pedestrian & car safety, active travel and playing safely**

Shine Bright EYM centres include age appropriate traffic education, including pedestrian and car safety and playing safely as part of the program to children and their families at the

kindergarten. These will be promoted during excursions and during play experiences within the program.

- Materials from Vic Roads including the Starting Out Safely Program are used to support the program.
- Families are encouraged to implement the strategies at home and as they travel to and from the centre.
- Families are encouraged to walk or ride with their child to the centre.
- Space is provided for children to store their bikes while they are at the centre.
- Active travel excursions near the centre are promoted.

### **Families and community**

Shine Bright EYM staff and families work together in partnership to promote and develop healthy and active habits in our preschool children. Links with other community services will be developed to help support and reinforce our healthy eating, oral health and active play messages.

- Educators and parents are encouraged to be good role models to promote healthy eating good oral hygiene practices and active play and to implement our, Healthy Eating, Oral Health and Active Play Policy.
- Information about the policy will be included in parent information sessions throughout the kindergarten year. Our policy folder (containing all policies) is available to parents/guardians to view at the kindergarten.
- Information about healthy food choices, oral health and encouraging active play/physical activity will be provided regularly to all families in our information books, newsletters, distribution of pamphlets and displays around the kindergarten.
- Parental input and involvement will be encouraged in the implementation and periodic review of this policy.

### **Supported Staff and Educators**

- Healthy eating, oral health and active play information and policy requirements are included in educator and staff orientation/induction processes.
- Educators are supported to consume healthy foods and drinks and maintain good oral health practices at work.
- Educators and staff are supported to be physically active and minimise sedentary behaviour, both inside and outside of work hours.

### **Policy Development and Implementation**

This policy was developed by all members of the service & Shine Bright EYM. The policy will be read and reviewed by Shine Bright EYM staff every 2 years

Parents will be encouraged to read and comply with the new policy. Support and guidance will be given as required.

This policy was adopted by the approved provider on April 2018.

Review Date: April 2021

### **Evaluation**

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes Shine Bright EYM will:

- Use National Quality Framework.
- If appropriate, conduct a survey in relation to this policy or incorporate relevant questions within the general parents/guardians survey.