



Nutrition, Oral Health, and Active Play Policy

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

Purpose

Shine Bright acknowledges the importance of healthy eating, oral health and physical activity and its contribution to good health and overall wellbeing.

This policy provides guidelines to:

- promote a healthy lifestyle and support children, staff, educators and families at the service to eat nutritious food, maintain oral health and participate in physical activity and active play
- ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about nutrition, oral health and physical activity are met
- ensure that the dietary and cultural needs of children and families are taken into consideration when planning menus and implementing nutrition, oral health and active play activities.

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 *Nutrition, 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 behaviour, oral hygiene practices 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.

Nutrition

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

Oral health

Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem despite being largely preventable. It is important to note that oral health promotion is complementary to promoting healthy eating

Oral health behaviours have a major influence on children's health and wellbeing and a direct impact on their growth and development. Oral diseases can negatively affect individuals through pain, discomfort, general health and quality of life. Poor oral health can limit a child's capacity in biting, chewing, smiling, speaking, and psychosocial wellbeing. 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.

Active play

Active play (refer to definitions) 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.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011* including Regulations 77–78, 79–80 (if the service provides food), 168
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Food Act 1984 (Vic)
- *National Quality Standard* including Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

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. Active travel, which includes walking, cycling, scootering or any similar transport where physical activity is used to travel.

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).

Discretionary' foods and drinks: Food and drink items that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and that contain minimal vitamins, minerals or fibre. These can also be referred to as 'sometimes' foods and drinks

Food literacy: A collection of inter-related knowledge, skills and behaviours required to plan, manage, select, prepare and eat food to meet (dietary) needs.¹

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.

Sources and related policies

Sources

- *Australian Dietary Guidelines* 2019, National Health and Medical Research Council: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>
- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*: <https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/belonging-being-becoming-early-years-learning-framework-australia>
- Better Health Channel: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Dental Health Services Victoria: www.dhsv.org.au
- Food Safety Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand: www.foodstandards.gov.au
- Department of Health (2013) *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*: <https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-gug-staffcarers>
- *The Achievement Program* is a health and wellbeing initiative for early childhood services, schools and workplaces: www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au
- Healthy Eating Advisory Service: www.heas.health.vic.gov.au
- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Infant Feeding Guidelines: information for health workers* (2013): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/infant-feeding-guidelines-information-health-workers>
- Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years): <https://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/npra-0-5yrs-brochure>
- National Health and Medical Research Council, *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (5th edition, 2013): <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/staying-healthy-preventing-infectious-diseases-early-childhood-education-and-care-services>
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*: www.education.vic.gov.au

Service policies

- Anaphylaxis Policy
- Asthma Policy
- Curriculum Development Policy
- Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy
- Diabetes Policy
- Excursions and Service Events Policy
- Food Safety Policy
- Hygiene Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Road Safety and Safe Transport Policy
- Sun Protection Policy

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play (refer to *Definitions*)

- providing ongoing information, resources and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including oral health, for young children (refer to *Sources*)
- recognising families, educators and staff as role models and encouraging them to bring/use foods and drinks that are in line with the service's Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy
- ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 77) (refer to *Hygiene Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*)
- ensuring measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*)
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of, and plan for, the dietary needs of all children
- ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times (Regulation 78(1)(a)) (Only tap water and plain milk are encouraged.)
- ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b))
- ensuring educators are supported to access a range of resources to increase their capacity to promote healthy eating, oral health and active play initiatives for children
- ensuring staff and educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning
- ensuring that discretionary food and drinks do not appear in any sponsorship, fundraising or marketing activities
- ensuring celebrations and other service events promote healthy food options and limit discretionary options
- ensuring service facilities and equipment enable active travel and road safety for children, staff, educators and families
- ensuring there is a suitable space for breastfeeding and storage of breast milk is available
- ensuring space and facilities are available to allow staff and educators to store and prepare healthy food
- ensuring healthy food and drinks are promoted, and sometimes/discretionary food and drinks are discouraged for snacks and lunches, in the service and brought from home, educating families about discretionary foods are conversations that should, not occur in front of children. **Staff are not to police food and should not shame children who have brought discretionary food into the service.**
- ensuring that healthy eating, oral health and active play information and policy requirements are included in staff orientation/induction

Where food is provided at the service:

- ensuring the provision of nutritionally balanced and culturally sensitive meals, in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, as required
- ensuring that staff who are responsible for menu planning participate in regular nutrition and safe food handling training, and are kept up to date with current research, knowledge and best practice
- ensuring that food and drink provided by the service is nutritious, varied, adequate in quantity and appropriate to children's growth and development, and meets any specific cultural, religious or health needs (Regulation 79(1))

- ensuring the service menu has been assessed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service's FoodChecker tool and meets the criteria determined
- ensuring that a weekly menu is displayed in a location accessible to parents/guardians, and that it accurately describes the food and drinks to be provided by the service each day (Regulation 80(1)).

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day-to-Day Charge are responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to learn about and make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play
- embedding opportunities to learn about healthy eating and oral health and the importance of physical activity in the educational program, throughout the year
- ensuring oral hygiene practices are undertaken at the service where appropriate
- ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 77) (refer to *Hygiene Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*)
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment or on initial diagnosis
- ensuring measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*)
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of, and plan for, the dietary needs of all children
- ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times (Regulation 78(1)(a)). (Only tap water and plain milk are encouraged.)
- ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b))
- registering and engaging the service with the *Achievement Program* (refer to *Sources*)
- ensuring that age-appropriate adult-guided and child-initiated active play is planned on a daily basis across all age groups
- ensuring that cultural and religious practices/requirements of families are accommodated to support children's learning and development
- developing and reviewing guidelines for celebrations, fundraising activities and other service events in consultation with educators, staff, parents/guardians and families to focus on healthy alternatives
- providing families with information and strategies to promote healthy eating, oral health and active play and how to access relevant services (including local dental clinics)
- developing links with local and regional health services, community organisations and businesses that provide expertise, resources and support for healthy eating, oral health and active play
- ensuring educators are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to develop adult guided and child initiated active play experiences and promote healthy eating and oral health
- considering this policy when organising excursions, service events and any sponsorship or marketing opportunities
- ensuring the layout of the grounds and buildings is inclusive of the diversity and abilities of all children and encourages physical activity and movement
- ensuring recommendations about physical activity and screen time from the Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 Years) are met

- supporting active travel to and from the service
- ensuring staff and educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning.

Where food is provided at the service:

- ensuring that food and drink provided by the service is nutritious, adequate in quantity and appropriate to children's growth and development in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines, and meets any specific cultural, religious or health needs (Regulation 79(2))
- ensuring the service menu has been assessed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service's FoodChecker and meets the criteria determined
- ensuring that a weekly menu is displayed in a location accessible to parents/guardians, and that it accurately describes the food and drinks to be provided by the service each day (Regulation 80(1)).

All educators/staff are responsible for:

- complying with the service's Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy and with the Food Safety Act
- being aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment at the service or on initial diagnosis
- implementing measures to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*)
- being aware of, and planning for, the dietary needs of all children
- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play
- discussing healthy eating choices with children and introducing the concept of 'sometimes' and everyday foods and drinks
- providing a variety of cooking and food experiences that support children to develop food literacy and positive habits relating to food
- role-modelling positive eating, drinking and physical activity behaviours and promoting a healthy relationship with food
- ensuring that food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe or reward at any time
- exploring and discussing diverse cultural, religious, social and family lifestyles
- considering this policy when organising excursions and service events
- supporting students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service
- keeping parents/guardians informed of current information relating to healthy eating, oral health and active play
- ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times indoors and outdoors, and reminding children to drink regularly throughout the day, including at snack/meal times
- ensuring that children can readily access their own clearly labelled drink containers (where this is a service practice)
- providing food and drinks at regular intervals, and encouraging children to actively participate in, and enjoy, snack/meal times without feeling rushed
- providing a positive eating environment and sitting and interacting with children at meal times
- encouraging children to be independent at snack/meal times e.g. opening lunchboxes, pouring drinks, self-feeding, serving and using utensils in a culturally-sensitive way
- providing opportunities for children to learn about, and develop skills for oral health through the educational program, including age-appropriate tooth brushing

- providing adequate supervision (refer to *Definitions*) for all children at all times, including at meal times
- ensuring children are not sedentary or inactive for more than 1 hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping
- supporting children to develop collaboration skills during play
- planning and providing active play and movement experiences that are age-appropriate, inclusive of diversity and abilities and support children to develop fundamental movement skills
- considering opportunities for children to be physically active indoors, particularly in adverse weather conditions
- ensuring screen based activities do not exceed the recommendations in the Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (birth to 5 years)
- providing age-appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and passenger safety to both children and parents/guardians at the service
- promoting safe behaviour through daily practice as part of the program including teaching children to use equipment safely
- using and promoting local parks, bike paths and recreation facilities, where appropriate, to encourage physical activity

Where food is provided at the service:

- displaying menus, sharing recipes and encouraging feedback about the food provided at the service.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- complying with the requirements of this policy
- providing details of specific nutritional/dietary requirements, including the need to accommodate cultural or religious practices or food allergies, on their child's enrolment form, and discussing these with the Nominated Supervisor/Child's Teacher prior to the child's commencement at the service, and if requirements change over time (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy* and *Diabetes Policy*)
- communicating regularly with educators/staff regarding children's specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences
- encouraging their child/ren to drink an adequate amount of water (preferably tap water), and discouraging 'discretionary' drinks
- providing healthy, nutritious food for snacks/meals, including fruits and vegetables in line with the service's *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play* policy, where applicable
- providing healthy, nutritious food, including fruits or vegetables for sharing at morning or afternoon tea, where applicable
- providing nutritious food and drinks for celebrations, fundraising activities and service events, consistent with service policy
- encouraging children to exercise by engaging in active play, and walking or riding a bike to the service where appropriate
- dressing their child/ren so they can engage safely in active play.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from educators, staff, parents/guardians, children, management and all affected by the policy
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required with all members of the service
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any change to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

Policy Development and Implementation

This policy was developed by all members Shine Bright EYM. The policy will be read and reviewed by Shine Bright EYM staff every 3 years

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

Attachments

- Attachment 1: [The National Physical Activity Recommendations for Children 0 to 5 years](#)
- Attachment 2: [Healthy Eating Guidelines](#)
- Attachment 3: [Precautionary advice on early years service drinking water systems](#)

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the approved provider on July 2021.

REVIEW DATE: 2024