

Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play

Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- actively promoting nutritious food and positive eating habits that contribute to healthy growth and development in children;
- encouraging and promoting physical activity by providing a range of active play experiences for all children at all services;
- providing a safe, supportive and social environment in which children can enjoy eating, develop self-help skills and learn about their own well-being;
- encouraging and facilitating children’s active participation and decision making at mealtimes;
- consulting and working collaboratively with families regarding their child’s nutrition and dietary requirements, including responding appropriately to food allergies and recognising cultural and religious practices, and lifestyle choices;
- ensuring that food and drink items provided by the service are consistent with national and state regulations, guidelines and recommendations;
- providing children and families with opportunities to learn about food, nutrition, oral health and healthy lifestyles;
- ensuring adequate health and hygiene procedures, including safe practices for handling, preparing, storing and serving food;
- providing a supportive environment for mothers to breastfeed and place to store breast milk;
- ensuring the policy is shared with all members of the service (including management, educators, staff, volunteers, families and children) with opportunities to provide feedback;

Executive Summary

Uniting Early Learning acknowledges that every member of the service impacts on children’s health and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes healthy eating and good oral health. 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, development, and wellbeing. Promoting awareness of positive eating behavior, good oral health, and the importance of physical activity from an early age can instill good habits that will remain throughout a person’s life. Information sharing with families is integral to understand children’s individual likes, dislikes, special dietary needs, and any cultural and religious requirements related to their wellbeing.

Educators play a key role in modelling and reinforcing an active and healthy lifestyle. Intentional teaching practice will provide child-focused, planned, and incidental experiences that promote nutrition, sound oral health and physical activity that builds upon children’s development.

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Children require opportunities to learn to be responsible for their own health and physical wellbeing. Encouraging active engagement, conversations and decision-making about healthy choices, dental hygiene and physical fitness will provide the foundation for children’s optimum growth.

Current Environmental Context

The responsibilities of each relevant party are noted in *Attachment 1a*.

Attachment 1a: Responsibilities relating to the Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy

References/Sources

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Uniting Child Safety Policy – Uniting adopts the Uniting Church Australia National Child Safety Policy Framework, 2019 and the principles of this Policy Framework.

Uniting Early Learning acknowledges the contribution of the City of Greater Geelong, Star Health & Central Gippsland Health Promotion Officers, in the development of this policy.

- Dealing with Medical Conditions policy
- Anaphylaxis appendix
- Asthma appendix
- Diabetes appendix
- Educational Program and Practice policy
- Excursions Regular Outings and Service Events policy
- Food Safety policy
- Hygiene and Infectious Diseases policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness policy
- Inclusion, Diversity and Equity policy
- Sun Protection Policy

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Achievement Program: <https://www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au/>
- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code
- Australian Breastfeeding Association: <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/>
- *Australian Dietary Guidelines* (2013) National Health and Medical Research Council: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines>
- *Belonging, Being and Becoming. The Early Years Learning and Development Framework for Australia* (2009)
- Better health Channel <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>
- Cavallini, I and Tedeschi, M (eds) (2008), [The Languages of Food: recipes, experiences, thoughts Reggio Children Publications](#)
- Do Food safely - <https://Dofoodsafely.health.vic.gov.au>
- Food Safety -I’m Alert food safety online training program – Tasmania – [Click here](#)

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- Children’s Service amendment Act 2019
- *Children’s Services Regulations 2020*
- Dental Health Services Victoria – includes resources on oral health: www.DHSV.org.au
- Early Learning Association Australia – Road Safety Education <https://elaa.org.au>
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 77–78, 79–80, 168 (2ai)
- *Food Act 1984* (Vic), as amended 2012 [Food act legislation](#)
- Food Safety Victoria, Department of Health – *Food Safety and Regulation*: 1300 364 352
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand – for information on food safety and food handling www.foodstandards.gov.au
- *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*: www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-earlychildhood-nutrition-resources
- Healthy Eating Advisory Service: <http://heas.health.vic.gov.au>/phone 1300 225 288 or email heas@nutritionaustralia.org
- *Infant Feeding Guidelines* (2012) National Health and Medical Research Council : <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/infant-feeding-guidelines-information-health-workers>
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety, Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with families and communities, Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership
- Nitzke, S, Riley, D, Ramminger, A and Jacobs, G (2010), [Rethinking Nutrition: Connecting Science and Practice in Early Childhood Settings](#). Redleaf Press, St Paul, USA
- Nutrition Australia-*Healthy eating in the National Quality Standard*: <http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/healthy-eating-national-quality-standard>
<http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/early-childhood-services/menu-planning>
- Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care 5 (2014) Standard 1
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for all Children from Birth to Eight Years (2016)
- Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years): <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/npra-o-5yrs-brochure>
- Australia’s Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults: <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateg-phys-act-guidelines#npa1864>
- [Home | Move Well Eat Well - Tasmanian Gov](#) - similar to Healthy Eating Advisory Service

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Learning on 05 October 2021

Review:

This policy is due for review by 05 October 2022

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Attachment 1a-Responsibilities relating to the Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy

Approved Provider

- Ensure that the service environment and educational program supports staff, children, and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health, and active play
- Enable whole service engagement when reviewing this policy
- Support all stakeholders in the implementation of this policy
- Ensure that all educators/staff are aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment or on initial diagnosis
- Ensure that all educators/staff are aware of, and plan for, the dietary needs of children diagnosed with diabetes
- Ensure measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes
- Provide ongoing information, resources, and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including healthy eating, oral health and active play, for young children
- Ensure that all educators/staff comply with the *Food Safety Act*
- Ensure that celebrations, fundraising activities, and other service events are consistent with the purposes and values of this policy and service procedures
- Provide healthy suggestions for morning/afternoon tea and/or lunchboxes for children in line with Australian Dietary Guidelines
- Ensure that fresh drinking tap water is always readily available, both indoors and outdoors and when on excursions. Remind children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times. Hydration on hot days is especially important
- Recognise that families, educators, and staff are role models and encourages them to bring/use foods and drinks that are in line with the Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play policy
- Educators are supported to access resources, tools & professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to engage in adult-guided active play and physical activity, healthy eating and oral health with children
- Establish partnerships with relevant organisations and health professionals to support healthy eating, oral health practices, movement, and physical activities where appropriate
- Promote healthy eating, oral health and physical activity and movement information and policy requirements are included in educator and staff orientation/induction
- Educators and staff are supported to be physically active and minimise sedentary behaviour, both inside and outside of work hours [Community HUB-Spring Day](#)
- Be You - Community Learning -[Click here](#)

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Where food is provided at the service

- allocate finances to ensure the provision of nutritionally balanced and culturally sensitive meals, as required
- ensure 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
- ensure that food and drink provided by the service is nutritious, adequate in quantity and appropriate to children's growth and development, and meets any specific cultural, religious or health needs
- ensure that a weekly menu is displayed in a location accessible to parents, and that it accurately describes the food and drinks to be provided by the service each day
- Provide a welcoming, appropriate, and comfortable breastfeeding space for mothers to breastfeed or express milk within the service
- The menu is reviewed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service Food Checker and meets the criteria
- Ensure best practices are followed in relation to bottle feeding and sipper cups and that the service is aware of and trained in procedures for preparing, heating, and storing bottles of formula and breast milk
- Ensure the menu is developed in collaboration with families and children

Recommended for services participating in the Achievement Program and other health initiative programs

- Register the service with the *Achievement Program* or other relevant programs
- Where food is provided at the service, the menu is reviewed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service and meets the criteria determined
- The service aims to identify and address barriers for active travel within the local environment, for example, safe walking and cycling paths
- Active travel is promoted and space is provided at the service for children, families and educators/staff to leave active travel equipment

Responsible Person

- Ensure that the service environment and educational program supports staff, children, and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play
- Ensure that all educators/staff are aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment or on initial diagnosis
- Ensure that all educators/staff are aware of, and in collaboration with children and families plan for the dietary needs of children diagnosed with diabetes
- Ensure measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes
- Provide and display alternative menu for children who have allergies to foods
- Provide ongoing information, resources, and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including healthy eating, oral health and active play, for young children

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- Ensure that all educators/staff comply with the *Food Safety Act* to ensure appropriate staff have a certificate in safe food handling and where food is provided, the premises is registered
- Ensure that celebrations, fundraising activities, and other service events are consistent with the purposes and values of this policy and service procedures and promote healthy food options
- Provide healthy suggestions for morning/afternoon tea and/or lunchboxes for children in line with Australian Dietary Guidelines
- Discourage parents from providing children with 'discretionary choices'/ 'Sometimes food and drink' ([see Glossary](#)) but remain sensitive to the individual circumstances of each family when enacting this policy
- Ensure that fresh drinking tap water is always readily available, both indoors and outdoors and when on excursions. Remind children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times. Hydration on hot days is especially important
- Educators are supported to access resources, tools & professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to engage in adult-guided active play and physical activity, healthy eating and oral health with children
- Ensure Local parks, bike paths and recreation facilities are used and promoted where appropriate to encourage physical activity.
- Ensure diversity and cultural practices are considered when implementing this policy and physical activity and movement practices.
- Ensure children are not sedentary or inactive for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping.
- Engage with children and promote healthy eating, oral hygiene and active play.
- Ensure children are taught how to use equipment safely
- Ensure the layout of buildings and grounds and equipment encourages physical activity and movement all day and is inclusive of all children
- Ensure children are educated about positive safety behaviours, including the correct use of facilities and equipment, and identifying and responding to safety hazards.
- Provide opportunities for families to review and contribute to the menu

Where food is provided at the service, family day care residence or venue:

- Manage the food budget
- Ensure that food and drink provided to children is nutritious, adequate in quantity and appropriate to children's growth and development, and meets any specific cultural, religious or health or personal preference needs
- Ensure that a weekly menu is displayed in a location accessible to parents, and that it accurately describes the food and drinks to be provided by the service each day
- Ensure that where required the service is registered and working in line with the Food Safety Act and National Regulations. Family Day Care residence food preparation area will be accessed against the FDC Residence/In Venue Safety Check – form 46.1
- Ensure that the cook, and any staff involved in food preparation, serving and storage, comply with the Food Safety Act

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- Facilitate education of staff to assist in compliance with the Food Safety Act e.g. safe food handling courses
- Display menus, share recipes and encourage feedback about the food provided at the service
- Ensure that cultural and religious practices/requirements of families are accommodated to support children’s learning and development
- Develop and review guidelines for celebrations, fundraising activities, sponsorship, and other service events in consultation with Uniting policies, educators, staff, parents, and families
- Develop links with local and regional health services, community organizations’ and businesses that provide expertise, resources and support for healthy eating, oral health, and active play
- Staff & educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning
- Food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe, or reward at any time
- The service engages in walking excursions within the local community that promotes physical activity and safe active travel and plans for experiences that support children’s learning in the natural environment
- Involve children in healthy food experiences through growing, cooking and shopping
- Implement a dental care program and where appropriate, include brushing teeth
- Provide a welcoming, appropriate, and comfortable breastfeeding space for mothers to breastfeed or express milk within the service
- Ensure the service is aware of and trained in procedures for preparing, heating, and storing bottles of formula and breast milk
- Store all bottles in an appropriate area for food preparation and storage that complies with the food safety standards for kitchens and food preparation areas

Recommended for services participating in the Achievement Program

- Register the service, family day care residence/venue with the *Achievement Program*
- Where food is provided at the service, the menu can be reviewed on the Healthy Eating Advisory Service website, menu planning guidelines [Click here](#) or Move Well Eat Well in Tasmania- [click here](#).
- The service aims to identify and address barriers for active travel within the local environment. For example, safe walking and cycling paths
- Active travel is promoted and space is provided at the service for children, families and educators/staff to leave active travel equipment

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Educators

- Recognise mealtimes as a social opportunity, with children often choosing to eat with friends, making their own food choices and decisions about portion sizes
- Ensure that fresh drinking tap water is always readily available, and remind children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times. Hydration on hot days is especially important
- Staff & educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning
- Food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe, or reward at any time
- Comply with this policy and with the *Food Safety Act*
- The service engages in walking excursions within the local community that promotes physical activity and safe active travel and plans for experiences that support children’s learning in the natural environment
- Implement adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing, and storing food, to minimise risks to children (refer to *Hygiene and Infectious Disease policy* and *Food Safety policy*)
- Be aware of a child’s food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment at the service or on initial diagnosis
- Implement measures to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes
- Be aware of, and planning for, the dietary needs of children diagnosed with diabetes
- Discuss healthy eating choices with children, introduce the concept of discretionary choices/‘Sometimes food and drink’ ([see Glossary](#)), and role-model positive behaviours during meal times
- Explore and discuss diverse cultural, religious, social and family lifestyles and impact on nutrition and food choice
- Consider this policy when organising excursions and service events
- Support students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service
- Keep parents informed of current information relating to healthy eating, oral health and active play
- Ensure that children can readily access their own clearly labelled drink containers (where this is a service practice)
- Provide food and drinks at regular intervals, and encourage children to actively participate in, and enjoy, snack/mealtimes without feeling rushed
- Encourage children to make appropriate decisions about healthy meal choices and portion sizes
- Provide opportunities for children to learn about and develop skills for oral health through the educational program
- Provide adequate supervision for all children during meal/snack times and where appropriate implement a dental hygiene program
- Encourage children in a culturally sensitive way to be independent at snack/mealtimes e.g. opening lunchboxes, pouring drinks, self-feeding, serving, and using utensils. Independent serving of meals is encouraged and supervised
- Involve children in healthy food experiences through growing, cooking and shopping
- Plan and provide outdoor, active play that is stimulating, promotes skill development, considers safety issues and ensures adequate supervision
- Consider opportunities for children to be physically active indoors, particularly in adverse weather conditions
- Provide daily opportunities for all children to participate in age-appropriate active play
- Act as positive role models by engaging in physical activity

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- Minimise and closely supervise screen-based activities, in line with recommended guidelines
- Provide age-appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and passenger safety, to both children and parents at the service
- Promote safe behaviours through daily practice as part of the program
- Implement a dental care program and where appropriate, include brushing teeth
- After eating, encourage children to have a drink of tap water to help cleanse their mouth of food particles
- Provide a welcoming, appropriate and comfortable breastfeeding space for mothers to breastfeed or express milk within the service
- Store all bottles in an appropriate area for food preparation and storage that complies with the food safety standards for kitchens and food preparation areas
- Educators and staff are supported to be physically active and minimise sedentary behaviour, both inside and outside of work hours.

Parents

- Involve children in healthy food experiences through growing, cooking and shopping
- Be familiar and support the requirements of this policy
- Provide 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 discuss these prior to the child's commencement at the service, and if requirements change over time
- Communicate regularly with educators/staff regarding children and families specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences
- Where applicable, provide healthy, nutritious food, including fruits and vegetables, for snacks/meals; for sharing at morning or afternoon tea; for celebrations, fundraising activities and service events, consistent with service policy
- Refrain from bringing food into the service when food is provided by the service
- encourage children to exercise by engaging in active play, and walking or riding a bike to the service where appropriate
- Review and contribute to menu options from parents

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

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