

<b>Policy Title:</b>	<b>Nutrition</b>
<b>Effective Date:</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> December 2010
<b>Review Date:</b>	As necessary by policy review committee.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The aim is to encourage children to develop eating and drinking patterns that will help them to live a happy active life. To support this ICC will

- provide snacks and meals at the Centre that are varied, interesting and nutritionally sound – based on the national dietary guidelines for children.
- present and serve food in ways which promote and develop children’s social skills and encourage their participation in food preparation.

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

At enrolment a child’s eating patterns and preferences should be discussed. Care should be taken to explain and discuss the Centre’s food policies and the families’ own practices. This will provide a guide to how the “new” foods at the Centre complement and/or supplement those of the home. Ideas from families will be added to the Centre’s Menu. Food has many cultural faces and its symbolism, preparation and consumption has many meanings. What is eaten, how it is eaten, and its overall importance in life may reflect differing cultural values. The way food is used within the Centre should show an awareness of this.

This policy was developed according to the following resources: the Accreditation Helpline, Central Coast Area Health Service Nutrition Department, Caring for Infants by Health and Family Services and ICC family feedback.

This policy was ratified by the Management Committee in May 2003. It was reviewed by staff and Management Committee after the Draft Health and Safety in Child Care Centres Model Policies and Practices – 2003, was consulted in October 2005. Reviewed again in July 2007 – no changes made. Changes made to include references to the Children’s Services Regulation 2004 after a Department of Community Services spot check in January 2008. Reviewed and these changes approved by the Management Policy Sub-Committee group in February 2008. Reviewed again in December 2010 – no changes made.

## **SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

A child’s diet provides a basis from which a child can develop in a happy and healthy manner. A child’s dietary preferences and needs can also reflect and express that child’s individuality. It is also recognised that children’s needs vary with moods, growth and energy requirements.

## **POLICY DETAIL/ BUSINESS RULES**

Meals are written on the menu and the menu is displayed two weeks in advance at all times – as per statutory requirements.

The following broad guidelines have evolved. The Centre serves meals:

- that are whole and fresh
- high in natural fibre
- low in salt and added sugars
- that comprise lean red meats a minimum of 4 times per fortnight

- that comprise chicken, fish, pork, veal a minimum of 3 times per fortnight
- that comprise vegetarian dishes a minimum of twice per fortnight
- that are consistent with recommended balances of the 5 food groups
- the ingredients of which are stored, prepared and served in a hygienic manner
- that are sensitive to individual developmental and dietary needs, restrictions and preferences
- that are prepared in ways that maintain the maximum amount of nutritional value
- that promote the social aspect of mealtimes
- that facilitate some participation in meal preparation to develop children's skills
- that combine the intake of liquid: milk and water is served regularly throughout the day; soft drinks or flavoured milk will not be served (juice and cordial will not be provided by the Centre).
- that are within the budget.

Mealtimes should be a happy and social time with an atmosphere that reinforces positive attitudes to food and eating. Meals are generally consumed in small groups at tables where children are encouraged to remain sitting, and are accompanied at each table by an adult to provide a positive role model and maintain a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere. Slow eaters should be allowed to take their time and enjoy their meals.

Mealtimes can provide experiences in socialisation and independence. Children should be given opportunities to serve and clean up after themselves, as well as appreciate the needs of others and share with them. . Eating utensils and the furniture used when eating is of a shape and size that encourage development of eating skills and independence in eating by children.

The centre seeks to compliment the pleasurable nature of mealtimes by involving children in food preparation and the set-up for mealtimes – and support experimentation in line with an inclusion philosophy.

Children have limited choices about what they eat – it is often what adults serve them rather than what they most wish to eat – and we should respect the choices they do make within the limits we set. Children should not be forced to eat food they refuse. Sometimes children may use food to gain attention and/or achieve other goals. They will eat if they are hungry and should not receive reinforcement for negative behaviour. Food should not be used as a punishment. Dessert should not be withheld as a punishment for previous refusal – that may reinforce the perception of food as something to be toyed with, and deny the child the nutritional value of the second course. Dessert should incorporate fruits and other healthy “sweets” as much as possible and be nutritionally sound as it forms an essential part of the meal.

Foods which fall outside the guidelines – junk food and sweets, etc – will not be offered as bribes or rewards and may not be consumed, distributed or kept in the Centre.

Fussy eaters are encouraged to eat what is being served. However, if a child does not even try the main meal they will be given bread and salad. Dessert will still be offered but it will be in the form of fruit or yoghurt – not the ice cream or ice blocks which may be on the menu. The lunch will be wrapped up without any fuss and the child will be told they will be offered it again after sleep time (the majority of the time the children are more than happy to eat the meal at that time). If a child tastes the main meal and declares they do not like it, this is fine and normal dessert will be offered to them. It is important that staff consult with parents on any issues rising from individuals at mealtimes. This and any strategies should then be communicated to all staff so that there can be consistency for the child. Snacks in the form of fruit can be given outside of meals if a child is hungry.

### **What to do when a child asks for more**

- Children may be given small portions to commence with. This removes the pressure from having to 'eat it all' and it minimises waste and shows respect for the earth's resources. Children should be encouraged to finish what is on their plate before being given seconds. Be aware that children may not like what remains on their plate, but may still be hungry and wanting something else being offered. Adults should respect that children have different tastes and preferences.
- Water should be accessible to children at all times. All families are asked to provide a water bottle for their child – to be washed and refilled by them each day – which is kept at the Centre and offered to the children on a regular basis throughout the day. The older children have unlimited access to their bottles but the younger children's bottles are more closely monitored by staff due to the dangers of cross-infection.
- Cows milk and soymilk are served at breakfast, morning tea, afternoon tea and snack time. Water is also available at all these meals and it is served last so children can rinse their mouths out after eating – particularly in regard to lunch.
- Primary contact staff will also be educated about safe eating practices for children , understanding and handling eating behaviour of children and teaching the children about nutrition through food related activities. This is done through staff meetings, nutrition talks and other in-service opportunities for staff and families.

### **Special Stipulation for Babies**

For children under two the food consumed must be variously interesting, nutritious and very easily consumed. As well as ensuring that everything is easy to eat, it must also be highly nutritious. More substantial foods should also be prepared which allow children to explore and learn about their food, that they may learn of the essential values of their food. Special care should be taken to maintain nutrient value in the food, and not simply overcook it in an effort to make it readily digestible. The texture of the food should be varied once babies have passed the "mushed food" stage. New foods should only be added after consultation with parents. Under 3's have a limited ability to fully digest some high fibre foodstuffs, for example beans. Their nutritional and protein requirements may be supplemented with tempeh and tofu, meats and stocks amongst other foods.

Breastfeeding is encouraged and mothers are welcome to visit the Centre at any time for feeding. This is made part of individual babies' daily routines when applicable.

### **AUTHORITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES**

The Centre Director is responsible for ensuring all ICC staff have training in this policy. All ICC staff are accountable for the implementation of this policy.

### **OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION**

Children's Services Regulation 2004  
Dental Care Policy, Food Preparation and Handling Procedure.

**APPROVAL**

Approved by Management Committee	
   <b>Signature:</b> <b>Title:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date:</b></span>	
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