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**Nutrition Policy**

*Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*, rr 77, 78, 79, 80

National Quality Standard 2.2.1, 2.2.2

**INTRODUCTION**

In their first five years of life, children are developing rapidly and require a nutritious and safe diet for their intellectual, behavioural and physical development.

The early childhood years are critical times for exploring new foods and developing eating behaviours and food preferences. Healthy eating habits developed in early childhood will encourage healthy eating as an adult. Encouraging healthy eating in childhood is important to reduce the risk of nutrition-related diseases in the future.

Children need to eat a variety of food every day to be healthy. Parents can give children healthy lunches and snacks that taste great, are nutritious and assist with concentration and learning.

Research has shown that one in five pre-schoolers are either overweight or obese. The 2007 National Children’s Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey found that the dietary patterns of many Australian children are less than optimal with high consumption of salt and saturated fats and low consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Educators and staff can role model healthy eating and encourage young children to make healthier food choices. This will contribute to the prevention of weight problems in children, allowing children to thrive physically, socially and intellectually and assisting with the prevention of nutrition-related chronic diseases in the longer term.

**GOALS**

Riverside Preschool (‘the Preschool’) aims to:

* Ensure that all children at the Preschool have access to food and drinks that are nutritious, adequate in quantity, offered at frequent intervals, appropriate to the developmental needs and any special dietary needs of the child and appropriate to the culture and religion of the child.
* Provide parents with information about the approach to nutrition that the Preschool takes to meet the needs of the child.
* Provide parents with information to assist them in providing food for the child that is varied, adequate in quantity, appropriate to the developmental needs of the child and consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for children.
* Promote healthy eating habits and supply resources and information to staff and families on providing children with balanced diets.
* Role model healthy eating and activity to children throughout the day.

**STRATEGIES**

*The Approved Provider will ensure that:*

* All children have access to safe drinking water at all times;
* All children are offered food and beverages appropriate to their needs on a regular basis throughout the day;
* Food and beverages are nutritious and adequate in quantity and take each child’s individual dietary requirements, growth and development needs and any specific cultural, religious or health requirements into account;
* All educators have access to the *Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings*; and
* Educators and staff are aware of the need to implement adequate health and hygiene practices and use safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risks to children.

*The Nominated Supervisor will ensure that:*

* All children will have access to safe drinking water at all times;
* All children are offered food and beverages appropriate to their needs on a regular basis throughout the day;
* Food and beverages are nutritious and adequate in quantity and take each child’s individual dietary requirements, growth and development needs and any specific cultural, religious or health requirements into account;
* Educators and staff implement adequate health and hygiene practices and use safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risks to children;
* The Preschool promotes a ‘nut free preschool’ and adheres to all dietary requirements relating to medical conditions of children;
* The Preschool will provide families with current information on the dietary requirements of children to promote their optimal growth and development. The Preschool will also provide families with opportunities to discuss ways to maximise the health and wellbeing of their children; and
* The Preschool considers and respects family values and customs, including those relating to food and eating. When a child has particular needs relating to eating or food, the staff will discuss with the family the best way to accommodate those needs.

*Educators and staff will ensure that:*

* Safe drinking water is available to children at all times. If a child needs more fluids during the day, their bottles will be refilled with water. Children will be reminded to have a drink during the day, ensuring that the children have adequate fluid intake;
* Healthy eating is promoted through role modelling and eating with the children;
* Children are encouraged to make healthy food choices;
* Hand-washing practices are observed at all times before food is consumed;
* Mealtimes will be a positive, relaxed and happy time with a strong focus on fostering social interactions and gaining knowledge of nutrition and healthy eating;
* Mealtimes are opportunities to develop good eating behaviours, as well as learn about nutrition and food variety;
* Children are positively involved in mealtimes;
* Adequate health and hygiene practices are implemented and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food are used to minimise risks to children;
* When handling food, the following measures will be used:
* Hands are washed thoroughly and in dedicated wash basins;
* Gloves or tongs will be used. Gloves will be for single use and changed regularly. Food will not be handled with bare hands;
* Food will be reheated, preferably to 70 degrees, and served immediately;
* Food heated in the microwave will be checked for hotspots with a probe before serving;
* The fridges will be kept at a temperature less than 5 degrees;
* Food that has been out of the fridge for less than 2 hours can be refrigerated or used;
* Food that has been out of the fridge between 2-4 hours can be used immediately;
* Food that has been out of the fridge for more than 4 hours will be thrown away;
* Milk will be stored in the body of the fridge;
* Food storage and preparation areas will be kept clean at all times;
* After preparation of food, work spaces will be cleaned thoroughly;
* Food preparation and eating surfaces will be cleaned and sanitized before and after use; and
* Tea towels will be for single use. Air drying is the preferred option.
* The Preschool will remain a ‘nut free preschool’ and adheres to all dietary requirements relating to medical conditions of children. All food provided for children will be checked each morning to ensure no nut products are present. At this time, all food requiring refrigeration are stored appropriately at the earliest possible time;
* Special occasions are recognised and celebrated. Sometimes food may be used in such celebrations;
* Children will be encouraged to be as independent as possible at mealtimes through managing own food, such as opening containers and unwrapping food;
* Children will be encouraged to eat at the regular meal times. They will be able to decide how much they eat. No child will be force fed;
* Children will not be allowed to walk, lie down or sleep with food or drinks.
* Children who are eating will be supervised at all times;
* Children will not be permitted to resume play until they have finished eating;
* Parents will be provided with feedback if their child is not eating well. Any uneaten food will be returned home in the child’s lunch box so parents can monitor the child’s food intake during their time at Preschool;
* Food will never be used as a reward or punishment, either by its provision or its denial;
* The Preschool will keep additional food supplies to supplement the needs of children who may require extra snacks or lunch;
* Children will be given food awareness activities to reinforce healthy eating, such as opportunities to participate in food preparation and cooking. When programming cooking activities, staff will reflect a healthy, balanced diet and will incorporate food from a variety of cultures; and
* Educate and provide information to children and families on nutritious snacks and lunches that promote healthy eating.

*Families will:*

* Provide nutritious foods and a variety of foods from each of the food groups in their child’s lunchbox each day. If unsuitable foods are included in the child’s lunchbox, alternative foods will be provided and the parents will be reminded about the nutrition policy.

**EVALUATION**

The Preschool ensures that appropriate and healthy food and beverages are available to all children; that food is handled in a safe manner; that meal times are relaxed; and that healthy eating is role modelled to children.

**SOURCES**

Australian Government: Get up and Grow resource books

www.nutritionaustralia.org

Food and Nutrition- Healthy eating guidelines: what they mean

Health and Safety In Children’s Centres – Model Policies and Practices, 2nd edition

[www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au)

www.health.gov.au

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