

POLICY AIM

Sweetpeas aim is to provide food and beverages, as well as food and nutritional education that is consistent with the national dietary guidelines for children and adolescents, and national infant feeding guidelines. The service will follow state regulation, food safety principles, national dietary guidelines that are appropriate to the child's age, cultural background or medical needs.

This policy concerns the provision of healthy food and drink while children are in care and the promotion of normal growth and development.

This policy aims to:

- Encourage and support breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods.
- Promote healthy food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the *Australian Dietary Guidelines* and *Infant Feeding Guidelines*.
- Provide food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices.
- Provide a positive eating environment which reflects cultural and family values.
- Promote lifelong learning for children, early childhood educators and families about healthy food and drink choices.
- Encourage communication with families about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the service.

RATIONALE

Children in long day care generally receive 50% - 70% of their food intake whilst in care. It is therefore essential that the service provides information to parents/guardians so that adequate nutrition is provided to the children in proportion to the time spent in care. Sweetpeas Kindergarten recognises the importance of healthy eating to the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting the healthy food and drink choices of children in their care.

The service is committed to implementing the healthy eating key messages outlined in *Munch & Move* and *Feed Australia*, and to supporting the *National Healthy Eating Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings* as outlined in the *Get Up & Grow* resources.

Further, Sweetpeas Kindergarten recognises the importance of supporting families in providing healthy food and drink to their children. It is acknowledged that the early childhood setting has an important role in supporting families in healthy eating.

SCOPE - WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

- Child
- Staff/Educators
- Families
- Management

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QUALITY AREA 2 - CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Standard 2.1 (Health) - Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted
- Element 2.1.2 (Health practices and procedures) - Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
- Element 2.1.3 (Healthy lifestyles) - Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

RELATED SWEETPEAS POLICIES:

- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Bottle Preparation Procedure
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Dental Health Policy

- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Excursion Policy
- Food Preparation, Safety and Storage Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Infectious Diseases Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy

RELATED EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS:

- 77 Health, hygiene and safe food practices
- 78 Food and beverages
- 79 Service providing food and beverages
- 80 Weekly menu
- 90 Medical conditions policy
- 91 Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
- 160 Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator
- 162 Health information to be kept in enrolment record
- 168 Education and care service must have policies and procedures

RELATED LEGISLATION:

- Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand Regulations 1994
- Food Standards Code
- NSW Food Act 2003
- NSW Food Regulation 2015

TERMINOLOGY

- **Dietary requirements** - Food and beverages provided by a service must have regard to individual children's dietary requirements, meaning:
 - each child's growth and development needs
 - any specific cultural, religious or health requirements.

IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIES

LONG DAY CARE SERVICES

Encourage and support breastfeeding and appropriate introduction of solid foods

This section is most relevant to our St Marys service, however our teams endeavour to provide relevant parenting advice to all our families whenever needed.

The service will:

- Apply current national infant feeding recommendations.
 - Provide a suitable place within the service where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express breast milk.
 - Ensure the safe handling of breast milk and infant formula including transporting, storing, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle feeding.

Promote healthy food and drinks based on the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents.

The service will:

- Provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods for meals and snacks including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products, lean meats and alternatives.
- Plan and display the service menu (at least four weeks at a time) that is based on sound menu planning principles and meets the daily nutritional needs of children whilst in care. Sweetpeas uses *Feed Australia* to ensure the exact nutritional requirements for children are met.
- Plan healthy snacks on the menu to complement what is served at mealtimes and ensure the snacks are substantial enough to meet the energy and nutrient needs of children.
- Vary the meals and snacks on the menu to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas.

- Ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day.
- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances and special diets (including those related to religious or cultural beliefs) and consult with families to develop individual management plans.
- Ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking.
- Ensure all children remain seated while eating and drinking and have a pleasant eating environment.
- Always supervise children while eating and drinking.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for cooking staff and educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition.

Provide food to children that has been stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic manner and to promote hygienic food practices (see Food Preparation, Safety and Storage Policy)

The service will:

- Ensure gloves are worn or food tongs are used by all persons handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- Children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, warm running water and single use or disposable towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.
- Food is stored and served at safe temperatures i.e. below 5°C or above 60°C.
- Colour coded chopping boards are used and a sign is displayed in the kitchen to indicate which boards to use for which foods.
- Hands are washed after handling raw meats of any kind before touching other foods (including other raw meats).
- Children will be discouraged from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Food-handling staff attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information onto the rest of the staff.

Provide a positive eating environment which reflects cultural and family values

The service and educators will:

- Ensure that educators sit with the children at meal and snack times to role model healthy food and drink choices and actively engage children in conversations about the food and drink provided.
- Endeavour to recognise, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food as well as enjoying the social interactions with educators and other children.
- Encourage older toddlers and pre-schoolers to assist to set and clear the table and serve their own food and drink - providing opportunities for them to develop independence and self-esteem.
- Respect each child's appetite. If a child is not hungry or is satisfied, do not insist he/she eats.
- Be patient with messy or slow eaters.
- Encourage children to try different foods but do not force them to eat.
- Do not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes.

Promote lifelong learning for children, early childhood staff and families about healthy food and drink choices.

The service will:

- Foster awareness and understanding of healthy food and drink choices through including in the children's program a range of learning experiences encouraging children's healthy eating.
- Encourage children to participate in a variety of 'hands-on' food preparation experiences.
- Provide opportunities for children to engage in discovery learning and discussion about healthy food and drink choices.

Encourage communication with families about the provision of appropriate healthy food and drinks for children while they are attending the service

The service will:

- Request that details of any food allergies or intolerances or specific dietary requirements be provided to the service and work in partnership with families to develop an appropriate response so that children's individual dietary needs are met (see *Medical Conditions Policy* and *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*).
- Communicate regularly with families about food and nutrition related experiences within the service and provide up to date information to assist families to provide healthy food choices at home.
- Communicate regularly with families and provide information and advice on appropriate food and drink and what is served at the centre. This information may be provided to families in a variety of ways including factsheets, newsletters, daybook posts, during orientation, information sessions and informal discussion.

SWEETPEAS OOSH SERVICES

Our OOSH Service will:

Where food is provided by the OOSH Service:

- provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods for meals and snacks including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products, lean meats, and high protein alternatives;
- plan and display the OOSH Service menu that is based on the information provided by *Nutrition Australia* and meets 50% of the daily nutritional needs of children;
- plan healthy snacks on the menu to complement what is served at mealtimes and ensure the snacks are substantial enough to meet the energy and nutrient needs of children;
- vary the meals and snacks on the menu to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas;
- regularly review the menu to ensure it meets best practice guidelines;
- develop the menu in consultation with children, educators and families;
- consult with health professionals to support the menu development including Dietitians for children with special diets such as vegetarian and vegans;
- celebrate diversity by valuing and including foods of different cultures.

Where food is brought from home:

- provide information to families on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children and that are suitable for children's lunchboxes and after school snacks;
- provide information to families on how to read the Nutritional Information Panel on food and drink labels;
- encourage children to eat the more nutritious foods provided such as sandwiches, fruit, cheese and yoghurt, before eating any less nutritious food provided;
- strongly discourage the provision of highly processed snack foods high in fat, salt, and/or sugar, and low in essential nutrients in children's lunchboxes. Examples of these foods include sweet biscuits, some muesli bars, breakfast bars and fruit filled bars, and chips.
- food items that should not be brought to the OOSH service include confectionary (lollies, sweets, chocolate, jelly), deep fried foods (chicken nuggets, fish fingers), and sugary drinks (cordial, energy drinks)

Creating a positive learning environment

Our OOSH Service will:

- ensure that educators sit with the children at meal and snack times to role-model healthy food and drink choices and actively engage children in conversations about the food and drink provided;
- choose water as a preferred drink- consider serving it chilled or with ice in summer; add lemon, mint leaves or other fruits such as oranges for flavour;

- endeavour to recognise, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- choose foods from the five food groups;
- create a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food as well as enjoying the social interactions with educators and other children;
- encourage children to try different foods but do not force them to eat;
- not use food as a reward or withhold food from children for disciplinary purposes;
- role-model and discuss safe food handling with children.

Cooking with children

- Cooking can help develop children's knowledge and skills regarding healthy eating habits.
- Cooking is a great, fun activity and provides opportunities for children to be exposed to new foods, sharing of recipes and cooking skills.
- During any cooking experience, educators will be vigilant to ensure that the experience remains safe, and relevant food hygiene practices are adhered to.

ENSURE FOOD SERVICE PRACTICES REFLECT CURRENT HEALTH ADVICE

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sweetpeas made the following updates to service practices. Children were:

- no longer promoted to serve themselves
- sitting further apart from each other
- sitting outside where possible

As restrictions have eased and health advice has changed, we have begun to allow children to serve themselves under supervision at some mealtimes. We have also stopped distancing the children from each other, although we do still endeavour to have many of our meals in the outdoor environment, where practicable.

We will adapt this policy if and when the health advice changes again.

REFERENCES

- Australian Dietary Guidelines: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/adg>
- Better Health Channel: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- FeedAustralia: <http://www.feedaustralia.org.au/>
- Guide to the National Quality Standards 2011
- Munch & Move: www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au
- National Health and Medical Research Council (2024) - Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (6th Ed.)
- NSW Food Authority: www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- NSW Health: www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with *Regulation 172* of the National Regulations, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adapted previous Sweetpeas Nutrition Policy	June 2017	Cassandra Way (Educator/Admin)

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
			Janine Evans (Director)
1.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated NQS references 	June 2018	Cassandra Way (Educator/Admin) Janine Evans (Director)
1.2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No changes required 	July 2019	Janine Evans (Director)
1.3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated to make changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic 	March 2020	Janine Evans (Director)
1.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 changes remain in place as per NSW Health advice 	September 2020	Janine Evans (Director)
1.5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 changes remain in place due to the Delta strain outbreak 	September 2021	Janine Evans (Director)
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating COVID-19 measures due to the lifted restrictions and current Health advice Cosmetic changes to reflect new policy template Merged Nutrition Policy and Dietary Requirements Checked and updated hotlinks 	September 2022	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager) Janine Evans (Managing Director)
2.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed version numbering (Sept22 version previously 2.3) Checked all hotlinks No changes required 	September 2023	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager)
2.2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added new section of Sweetpeas OOSH services Added a heading for long day care Checked all hotlinks Small grammatical edits 	January 2025	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager) Janine Evans (Managing Director)