Early Learning
Nutrition, Oral Health, and Active Play

1. Policy Statement/Purpose

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.
Oral health is essential for children's overall health and 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. Tooth decay is Australia's most prevalent health problem despite being preventable. It is important to provide access to and establish good oral health practices at a young age as most children have formed lifelong habits by school age.

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 and by providing current information to parents when it is available.

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.

All children and young people have a right to feel safe and be safe. We are committed to providing environments where children and young people are respected, nurtured and cared for.

Uniting's Child Safety policy and procedures align with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and State and Territory based Child Safe Standards.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following groups working in Uniting Early Learning:

- Approved provider and persons with management or control
- Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge
- ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff
- Parents/guardians
- Contractors, volunteers, and students.

3. Policy

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- Liaising with government and other appropriate agencies regarding new research that becomes available to support continuous improvement, inform practice and strengthen outcomes for children's health, wellbeing and learning
- 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 a safe 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.
- Promote training/professional development for oral health and nutrition available. e.g., Dental Health Services Victoria and Smiles 4 Miles.

Principles to inform policy practice:

- Viewing the child as a valued citizen and social actor
- Educators ensure a safe and secure context in which interactions and conversations occur and demonstrate a genuine interest in what the child is expressing
- Planning will include an understanding about why and how the child is being invited to take part, what the purpose is, and how the child might contribute
- Children have the right for their privacy and confidentiality to be maintained

- Educators will have meaningful conversation with and among children through give-and-take dialogue. Exploring with children what they mean
- For inclusivity and cultural considerations, it is important to understand the environment children have come from and what they deem as safe and accessible spaces
- When engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, educators will seek advice from the local community, elders or family members about the best ways to be culturally safe, relevant and respectful
- When engaging with children whose first language is not English, educators will engage translators
- Educators will ensure all language is respectful, inclusive of all races, sex, gender, age, sexual identity and religion.

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by July 2029

4. Responsibilities relating to the Nutrition, Oral Health, and Active Play Policy

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Contractors, volunteers and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Ensure that a Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play policy is developed, implemented and complied by all educators, staff, families, students and volunteers at the service *R168, 170 & 171*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure that the service environment and educational program supports staff, children, and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health, and active play *R79*	**R**	✓	✓		
Ensure healthy eating and oral health information and policy requirements are included in staff orientation/induction.		✓	✓		
Oral hygiene practices are promoted and undertaken at the service when appropriate		✓	✓		✓
Guide families and children to eat a wide variety of foods from the five food groups each day. These are: • Fruit • Vegetables and legumes/beans • Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain • Milk, yoghurt, cheese and alternatives • Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans.		✓	✓		
Enable whole service and community engagement when reviewing this policy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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 are aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment or on initial diagnosis and are aware of which foods the child needs to avoid and plan accordingly for their dietary requirements *R90*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	
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 *R90*	**R**	✓	✓	✓	
Implement measures to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes *R77*	**R**	✓	✓		✓

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R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
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 *R80*	**R**	✓	✓		
Provide and display an alternative menu for children who have allergies to foods *R80*	**R**	✓	✓		
Provide opportunities for families to review and contribute to the menu	✓	✓	✓		
Share recipes and encourage feedback about the food provided at the service		✓	✓		
Ensure that all educators/staff comply with the *Food Safety Act* and ensure appropriate staff have a certificate in safe food handling and where food is provided, the premises is registered *R77*	✓	✓	✓		
Family Day Care residence food preparation area will be accessed against the FDC Residence/In Venue Safety Check – form 46.1 *R77*	✓	✓	✓		
Facilitate education of staff to assist in compliance with the *Food Safety Act* e.g., safe food handling courses *R77*	**R**	✓	✓		
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 *R77*	**R**	✓	✓		
Register and participate in the Achievement Program, Smiles 4 Miles or other relevant programs		✓	✓		
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)** *R77*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Regularly check expiry date of any food products that are stored and used at the service *R77*	**R**	✓	✓		
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 *R78 & 79*	**R**	✓	✓		

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The menu meets the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) Menu planning guidelines for long day care (this means it aligns with the Australian Dietary Guidelines) and Infant Feeding Guidelines; the menu is displayed for parents and carers and has been assessed using the HEAS Food Checker tool		✓	✓		
Where prepared food is provided at the service, the menu is reviewed on the Healthy Eating Advisory Service website, menu planning guidelines or Move Well Eat Well in Tasmania		✓	✓		
Diversity and culture are considered when implementing healthy eating and oral health practices and when menu planning. E.g. allocating finances for the provision of culturally sensitive meals	✓	✓			
Ensure that celebrations, fundraising activities, and other service events promote healthy food options and limit discretionary foods *R79*	**R**	✓	✓		
Provide healthy suggestions for morning/afternoon tea and/or lunchboxes and breakfast/ cooking where the service has a Breakfast Program and/ or where cooking is part of the program for children in line with Australian Dietary Guidelines *R79*		✓	✓		
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 *R78*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Families, educators, and staff are role models. Encourage and support 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	✓	✓	✓		
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	✓	✓	✓		
Educators and staff are supported to be physically active and minimise sedentary behaviour, both inside and outside of work hours	✓	✓	✓		

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Recognise mealtimes as a social opportunity, with children often choosing to eat with friends, making their own food choices and decisions about portion sizes *R155 & 156*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Educators interact with children at meal times and role model healthy eating *R155*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
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 the layout of buildings and grounds and equipment encourages physical activity and movement all day and is inclusive of all children	✓	✓	✓		
The service aims to identify and address barriers for active travel within the local environment, for example, safe walking and cycling paths		✓	✓		
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		✓	✓		
Ensure Local parks, bike paths and recreation facilities are used and promoted where appropriate to encourage physical activity		✓	✓		
Ensure children are not sedentary or inactive for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping.		✓	✓		✓
Plan and provide outdoor, age appropriate, active play that is stimulating, promotes skill development, considers safety issues, and ensures adequate supervision *R73, S167 & S168*	**R**	✓	✓		
Consider opportunities for children to be physically active indoors, particularly in adverse weather conditions		✓	✓		
Encourage children to exercise by engaging in active play, and walking or riding a bike to the service where appropriate		✓	✓		
Active travel is promoted, and space is provided at the service for children, families, and educators/staff to leave active travel equipment		✓	✓		
Ensure children are taught how to use equipment safely *S167*	**R**	✓	✓		✓

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Ensure children are educated about positive safety behaviours, including the correct use of facilities and equipment, and identifying and responding to safety hazards *S167*	**R**	✓	✓		
Where appropriate, 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 *S166*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Children are educated about healthy eating and oral health, and active learning experiences are included in the program *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		
Explore and discuss diverse cultural, religious, social and family lifestyles and the impact on nutrition and food choice *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		
Consider this policy when organising excursions and service events *R100 & 101*	**R**	✓	✓		
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 *R78 & 79*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Encourage children to make appropriate decisions about healthy meal choices and portion sizes *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Provide opportunities for children to learn about and develop skills for oral health through the educational program *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Provide adequate supervision for all children during meal/snack times and where appropriate implement a dental hygiene program *S168*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
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 supervise *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		
Involve children in healthy food experiences by planning opportunities for growing, cooking, and shopping *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		
Act as positive role models by engaging in physical activity		✓	✓		✓
Minimise and closely supervise screen-based activities, in line with recommended guidelines *S167 & S168*	**R**	✓	✓		✓

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Provide age-appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and passenger safety, to both children and parents at the service *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		
Promote safe behaviours through daily practice as part of the program *S167*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Implement a dental care / oral health program and where appropriate, include brushing teeth. healthy eating and oral health information is provided to families, such as information about accessing local dental services and how to create healthy and nutritious meals *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		
After eating, encourage children to have a drink of tap water to help cleanse their mouth of food particles *R 73*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Where possible, provide a welcoming, appropriate, and comfortable breastfeeding space for mothers to breastfeed or express milk within the service	✓	✓	✓		
Ensure educators are aware of and trained in procedures for preparing, heating, and storing bottles of formula and breast milk *R77*	**R**	✓	✓		
Best practices are followed in relation to bottle feeding and sipper cups as outlined in the NHMRC Infant Feeding Guidelines, such as not putting an infant to sleep while drinking from a bottle and a cup can be introduced around six months, to teach infants the skill of sipping drinks from a cup		✓	✓		✓
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 *R77*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Educators and staff are supported to be physically active and minimise sedentary behaviour, both inside and outside of work hours	✓	✓	✓		
Physical activity and movement information is provided to families and the wider community, such as information about minimising sedentary behaviour and strategies for increasing physical activity		✓	✓		✓
Involve children in healthy food experiences through growing, cooking and shopping *R73*	**R**	✓	✓		

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Provide details of specific nutritional/dietary requirements, including the need to accommodate cultural or religious practices or food allergies, on the 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				✓	

5. Legislation/Regulations

Child Safe Standards 2022
Children's Service amendment Act 2019
Children's Services Regulations 2020
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 77–78, 79–80, 168 (2ai)
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Food Act 1984 (Vic), as amended 2012
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
Infant Feeding Guidelines (2012) National Health and Medical Research Council:
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
Australian Dietary Guidelines (2013) National Health and Medical Research Council
Belonging, Being and Becoming. The Early Years Learning and Development Framework for Australia (2009)
Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code
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)
Nutrition Australia-*Healthy eating in the National Quality Standards*

6. Reference/Sources

Achievement Program
Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults:
Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years):
Australian Breastfeeding Association
Better health Channel
Dental Health Services Victoria – includes resources on oral health
Dental health Victoria
Do Food safely
Early Learning Association Australia – Road Safety Education
Food Safety -I'm Alert food safety online training program – Tasmania
Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood:
Healthy Eating Advisory Service phone 1300 225 288 or email heas@nutritionaustralia.org
Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS) Menu planning guidelines for long day care
Infant Feeding
Eat For Health
HEAS Food Checker tool
NHMRC Infant Feeding Guidelines
Home | Move Well Eat Well - Tasmanian Gov - similar to Healthy Eating Advisory Service
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

7. Related Documents

Uniting

Diversity Statement
Child Safety Commitment Statement
Code of Conduct
Child Safety Policy
Child Safety Code of Conduct
Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Policy
Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Early Learning

Dealing with Medical Conditions policy
Anaphylaxis policy
Asthma policy
Diabetes policy
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
Sun Protection Policy

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