

Early Learning

Food Safety Policy

Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- Protecting and promoting the health and safety of all children and adults attending the service
- taking all reasonable precautions to reduce potential hazards and harm to children attending the service and maintain an awareness of risk identification/management in regard to child safe environments
- Ensuring adequate health and hygiene procedures are implemented at the service, including safe practices for handling, preparing, storing, and serving food
- Promoting safe practices in relation to handling hot drinks at the service and providing guidance to all service users including visitors, in the prevention of scalds and burns that can result from handling hot drinks
- Recognising and promoting sustainable food practices and valuing the connection between food and culture
- Complying with recommendations in the [Healthy Eating in the National Quality Standard](#) and [The Achievement Program](#)
- Complying with all relevant legislation and standards, including the Food Act 1984 and the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.

Executive Summary

Food safety is very important in early childhood service environments. Young children are often more susceptible to the effects of foodborne illness than other members of the community. Foodborne illness (including gastrointestinal illness) can be caused by bacteria, parasites, viruses, chemicals, or foreign objects that are present in food.

Effective food safety practices can also assist in reducing the risk of a severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) by preventing cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies (refer to *Anaphylaxis appendix* and *Asthma appendix*).

Service provision will pay a high level of attention to personal hygiene, product choice, storage and preparation of food items, cooking, cooling and reheating of food (including food brought into the service such as children’s lunchbox food), cleaning and sanitising of equipment, and maintenance of hygienic premises to enable food safety and the minimisation of risk.

All educators are required to have current information and understanding of safe food practices, and training will be provided to ensure consistent procedural implementation relevant to the setting. A documented food safety program is to be maintained (where required), to identify and control food safety hazards.

Educators play a key role in modelling and reinforcing food safety routines. Intentional teaching practice and program development will promote the understanding of key concepts and procedures to both children and families.

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Current Environmental Context

This policy must be read in conjunction with the *Nutrition, Oral Health, and Active Play* policy,

Safe and hygienic storage, handling, preparation and serving of all food and drinks consumed by children, including foods bought from home always is essential. This includes infant milk/formula and food provided when attending excursions and regular outings.

Food provided by an education and care service must:

- Be fit for human consumption
- Not be adulterated or contaminated
- Not have deteriorated or perished.

Food handlers are required to have skills and knowledge in food safety and food hygiene that is appropriate to the activities they perform.

The *Food Act 1984* aims to reduce the incidence of foodborne illness by ensuring that food manufactured, transported, sold, prepared, and stored is safe, unadulterated, fit for human consumption and will not cause food poisoning. Under the Act, local councils and government departments are required to classify every food premises in their municipality according to its food safety risk. Uniting Early Learning should confirm their food safety risk classification and related requirements with the local council in the area in which they operate. (Refer to *Attachment 15b*.)

Standard 3.2.2A is a new national food safety standard included in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code), which commenced nationwide on 8 December 2023.

ECEC services that provide hot/cold meals and snacks are classified as Class 1 (high risk).

Class 1 services must:

- Ensure food that is sold or prepared for sale is safe to eat (this includes food provided to children as part of the program and included in the fees paid to the service by the family)
- Register annually with the council
- Be inspected by the council when first registered or when registration is transferred to a new proprietor
- Have a food safety program that is tailored specifically to their activities as a food premise
- Keep a copy of the food safety program on site
- Appoint a food safety supervisor with the necessary skills and accredited training to be available at all times the service is operating
- Undergo two mandatory compliance checks each year:
 - A council assessment of the premises and compliance with the documented food safety program
 - An audit of the food safety program by a Department of Health, approved auditor to determine adequacy and compliance.

ECEC services that supply low risk snacks such as cut fruit, milk, bread and cereals are classified as Class 4 (low risk).

Class 4 services **are not** required to have:

- A food safety program
- A Food Safety Supervisor (FSS)
- An annual council inspection.

However, Class 4 services must ensure that educators have the skills and knowledge needed to safely handle food in their work roles.

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To meet the requirements of the new standard, all child care centres preparing and/or cooking food will be required to have a Food Safety Supervisor (FSS) on site or reasonably available at all times to manage the food operations and handling of food at the centre. Services should nominate a Primary and Secondary FSS for each site and detail this in the Food Safety Program accordingly. All food handlers must have food handler training (cook and persons who prepare and/or serve food at any time).

Hygiene and food safety guidelines/posters should be displayed in the food areas of the service so that staff and families involved in the preparation and distribution of food to children are well informed about proper procedures. Educators will assist children to take responsibility for consuming food and drinks in a hygienic manner and implement safe food handling, transportation, and storage always.

Any outbreak of gastroenteritis or possible food poisoning that occurs at the service must be notified to Uniting, the appropriate authority, and parents.

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Reference/Sources

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Administration of First Aid Policy	Anaphylaxis appendix
Asthma appendix	Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy
Diabetes appendix	Excursions Regular Outings and Service Events Policy
Hygiene and Infectious Disease Policy	Incident, Injury, Trauma, and Illness Policy
Interactions with Children Policy	Nutrition, Oral Health, and Active Play Policy
Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy	Staffing Policy
Supervision of Children Policy	Uniting Child Safety Policy

- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code:
<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/code/Pages/default.aspx>
- [Bottle Feeding – nutrition and safety Better Health Channel](#) (last updated May 2016, viewed March 2018)
- Children’s Services Amendment Act 2019:
- Children’s Services Regulations 2020
- Do Food Safely (free online food safety program): <http://dofoodsafely.health.vic.gov.au/>
- [I’m Alert food safety training](#)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 167
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 77
- Food Act 1984 (Vic)
- Food Act 2003 (Tasmania)
- [Food Safety Programs for Food Service to Vulnerable Persons A guide to Standard 3.3.1](#)
- Food Safety Regulation in Victoria. Australian Institute of Food Safety
www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety email: foodsafety@health.vic.gov.au
- National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety
- [Staying Healthy Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services \(5th edition\) 3.5 Food Safety pg. 56. National Health and Medical Research Council \(updated June 2013\)](#)
- Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care Class 4 (October 2014). Standard 13.
- Department of Health and Human services-Public Environmental Health. 1800 671 738
- <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/publications/food-safety>
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

Form – [Food Allergy Form](#)

Form - [Risk Minimisation Plan and Communication Plan](#)

Form – [Special Dietary Needs form](#)

Authorisation

This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Learning on: 21/12/2023

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by 20/6/2025

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Responsibilities relating to the Food Safety Policy

Approved Provider

- Ensure that the Responsible person implements an effective food allergen management program
- Ensure staff are trained by appropriately qualified people in food allergen risks, management and communication so that they can:
 - Minimise a child's exposure to allergens
 - Always prepared to respond appropriately in case of an allergic reaction, including a potentially life-threatening reaction (anaphylaxis)
 - Ensure children / students with a food allergy are able to participate in the same/slightly adapted educational and recreational activities as their peers
- Ensure that the Responsible Person, staff, and volunteers at the service implement adequate health and hygiene practices, and safe practices for handling, preparing, and storing food, to minimise risks to children attending the service
- Ensure food that is sold or prepared for sale is safe to eat (this includes food provided to children as part of the program and included in the fees paid to the service by the family)
- Register annually with the council
- Be inspected by the council when first registered or when registration is transferred to a new proprietor
- Have a food safety program that is tailored specifically to their activities as a food premise
- Keep a copy of the food safety program on site
- Appoint food safety supervisors with the necessary skills and accredited training to be available at all times the service is operating
- Undergo two mandatory compliance checks each year:
 - A council assessment of the premises and compliance with the documented food safety program
 - An audit of the food safety program by a Department of Health, approved auditor to determine adequacy and compliance
- Ensure that all staff and families are provided with guidance around the process of sharing food as part of celebrations and that all food to be consumed by children has been purchased, has a receipt and list of ingredients. This will be recorded and families will be notified prior to consumption
- Comply with all requirements of the service's food safety risk classification under the *Food Act 1984*, as outlined by local council or Shire, including registering, implementing a food safety program, and employing a food safety supervisor if required
- Provide parents with a copy of this policy, and with up-to-date information on the safe provision of food for their children
- Ensure the Responsible Person and all staff are provided with access to this policy and are kept up to date with current legislation, standards, policies, information, and resources relating to food safety
- Monitor staff compliance with food safety practices
- Ensure that good hygiene practices are maintained at the service
- Identify potential hazards that may reasonably be expected to occur at each stage of the food-handling and preparation cycle and develop procedures to minimise these hazards. Stages of the cycle include ordering, delivery, storage, thawing, preparation, cooking, cooling, handling post-cooking, reheating, and serving
- Ensure that all facilities and equipment for food preparation and storage are clean, and in good repair and working order

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- Provide a calibrated thermometer in good working order, suitable for monitoring the temperature of the fridge/freezer in food preparation areas. Glass thermometers containing mercury are not recommended in or near food preparation areas
- Contact local council or Shire to determine requirements prior to selling food at a fête, food stall or other service event. Such requirements may include completing a Food Act notification form and/or a statement of trade form
- Remove pests and vermin from the premises
- Inform DE/ECU and DHHS/Tasmania Department of Health and parents if an outbreak of gastroenteritis or possible food poisoning occurs at the service
- Ensure that all permanent staff undergo training in safe food handling and that this is recorded, as required.

Responsible Person

- Ensure that all staff undergo training in safe food handling. All educators are required to complete *DO FOODS SAFELY* training
- Implement an effective food allergen management program
- Provide clear, up-to-date and accurate information on the food allergen status of the foods you provide
- Make sure staff are trained by appropriately qualified people in food allergen risks, management and communication so that they can:
 - Minimise a child's exposure to allergens
 - Ensure staff are always prepared to respond appropriately in case of an allergic reaction, including a potentially life-threatening reaction (anaphylaxis)
 - Ensure children / students with a food allergy are able to participate in the same/slightly adapted educational and recreational activities as their peers
- Staff should be aware of a child's ASCIA (Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy) Action Plan and should prepare an Individual Health Care/Management Plan created in consultation with the parent
- Ensure food that is sold or prepared for sale is safe to eat (this includes food provided to children as part of the program and included in the fees paid to the service by the family)
- Register annually with the council
- Be inspected by the council when first registered or when registration is transferred to a new proprietor
- Have a food safety program that is tailored specifically to their activities as a food premise
- Keep a copy of the food safety program on site
- Appoint food safety supervisors with the necessary skills and accredited training to be available at all times the service is operating
- Undergo two mandatory compliance checks each year:
 - A council assessment of the premises and compliance with the documented food safety program
 - An audit of the food safety program by a Department of Health, approved auditor to determine adequacy and compliance
- Comply with all requirements of the service's food safety risk classification under the *Food Act 1984*, as outlined by local council or Shire, including registering, implementing a food safety program, and employing food safety supervisors for centre based child care services
- Identify potential hazards that may reasonably be expected to occur at each stage of the food-handling and preparation cycle and develop procedures to minimise these hazards. Stages of the cycle

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include ordering, delivery, storage, thawing, preparation, cooking, cooling, handling post-cooking, reheating, and serving

- Ensure that all facilities and equipment for food preparation and storage are clean, and in good repair and working order
- Contact local council or Shire to determine requirements prior to selling food at a fête, food stall or other service event. Such requirements may include completing a Food Act notification form and/or a statement of trade form
- Inform families of the availability of cold storage facilities at the service to ensure parents make suitable food choices and storage, when supplying food/perishable food for their own child, or for children to share
- Ensure staff, parents and others attending the service are aware of the acceptable and responsible practices for the consumption of hot drinks/liquids
- Ensure this policy is referred to when undertaking risk assessments for excursions, regular outings, and other service events
- Ensure measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies (refer to Anaphylaxis appendix and Asthma appendix)
- Remove pests and vermin from the premises
- Display hygiene guidelines/posters and food safety guidelines/posters in the food areas of the service for the reference of staff and families involved in the preparation and distribution of food to children)
- Encourage volunteers to complete training in safe food handling techniques
- Keep up to date with current legislation, standards, policy, information, and resources relating to food safety
- Ensure that staff and volunteers at the service implement adequate health and hygiene practices, and safe practices for handling, preparing, and storing food, to minimise risks to children attending the service
- Ensure parents provide details of their child’s specific Special Dietary Needs including allergies, Religious or Cultural reasons, vegetarian/vegan or Food intolerance on the enrolment form, and discuss these prior to the child commencing at the service and whenever these requirements change
- Ensure students, volunteers, and casual and relief staff at the service are informed of this policy
- Be aware of safe food practices and good hygiene practices and undertake required training
- Refer to this policy when undertaking risk assessments for excursions and other service events
- Ensure that children’s lunchboxes are kept indoors, away from heat sources (including direct sunlight) and refrigerated if necessary
- Consider storage requirements of perishable foods for service-related events, especially when families provide food
- Discuss food safety with children to increase awareness and assist in developing safe practices
- Discourage children from sharing drink bottles or cups at the service
- Ensure that children do not share lunches to minimise risks in relation to children with food allergies
- Provide adequate supervision of children while they are eating and drinking
- Discard any unused milk/formula from babies’ bottles
- Ensure young children/babies are **NOT** placed in bed with a bottle of formula or milk
- Teach children to wash and dry their hands. Follow Handwashing guidelines (Attachment 15c in Hygiene and Infectious Disease Policy). Wash hands:
 - Before and after touching or eating food
 - After touching chicken or raw meat
 - After using the toilet

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- After blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing after playing with an animals/pet.
- Seek input from parents on cultural values or religious expectations regarding food handling, provision, and consumption
- Maintain good personal and kitchen hygiene (refer to *Hygiene and Infectious Disease* policy)
- Cover all wounds/cuts on hands or arms with brightly coloured wound strips. Gloves must be worn if wound is on hand
- Wear disposable gloves when handling food at the service
- Comply with the guidelines in relation to the consumption of hot drinks/liquids at the service (refer to
- Inform parents and visitors to the service about the guidelines in relation to the consumption of hot drinks at the service

Educator

- Keep up to date with current legislation, standards, policy, information, and resources relating to food safety
- Be aware of safe food practices and good hygiene practices and complete *DO FOODS SAFELY* training
- Refer to this policy when undertaking risk assessments for excursions and other service events
- Inform students, volunteers, and casual and relief staff at the service about this policy
- Refer to this policy when undertaking risk assessments for excursions and other service events
- Ensure that children’s lunchboxes are kept indoors, away from heat sources (including direct sunlight) and refrigerated if necessary
- Consider storage requirements of perishable foods for service-related events, especially when families provide food
- Discuss food safety with children to increase awareness and assist in developing safe practices
- Discourage children from sharing drink bottles or cups at the service
- Ensure that children do not share lunches to minimise risks in relation to children with food allergies
- Provide adequate supervision of children while they are eating and drinking
- Discard any unused milk/formula from babies’ bottles
- Ensure young children/babies are **NOT** placed in bed with a bottle of formula or milk
- Teach children to wash and dry their hands. Follow Handwashing guidelines Wash hands:
 - Before and after touching or eating food
 - After touching chicken or raw meat
 - After using the toilet
 - After blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing after playing with an animals/pet
- Encourage parents to discuss a child’s nutritional requirements, food allergies or food sensitivities, and inform the Responsible Person where necessary
- Seek input from parents on cultural values or religious expectations regarding food handling, provision, and consumption
- Inform the Responsible Person or Approved Provider of any outbreaks of gastroenteritis or possible food poisoning at the service
- Remove hazardous food, including food that has fallen on the floor, and provide alternative food items
- Document and implement a food safety program if required
- Maintain good personal and kitchen hygiene (refer to *Hygiene and Infectious Disease* policy)

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- Cover all wounds/cuts on hands or arms with brightly coloured wound strips. Gloves must be worn if wound is on hand
- Wear disposable gloves when handling food at the service
- Comply with the guidelines in relation to the consumption of hot drinks/liquids at the service (refer to
- Inform parents and visitors to the service about the guidelines in relation to the consumption of hot drinks at the service.

Parent

- Wear disposable gloves when handling food at the service
- Wash hands prior to participating in food preparation and cooking activities
- Ensure that food preparation surfaces, utensils, lunchboxes, and reusable drink bottles are clean
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly
- Pack a cold item, such as a frozen water bottle, with perishable foods in a child's lunchbox, or use an insulated lunchbox or cooler
- Provide details of specific nutritional requirements (including allergies) on child's enrolment form, and discuss these with the Responsible Person prior to the child commencing at the service and whenever these requirements change
- Complete the Special Dietary Needs e.g. Religious or Cultural reasons, vegetarian/vegan or Food intolerance form if required and discuss with the service
- Comply with the requirements of this policy.

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

Procedures for the safe storage and heating of food and drink

Services must ensure they follow the correct food handling requirements when preparing and storing foods which include:

- Hands must be washed prior to any preparation of food
- The fridge temperature must be kept at 5°C or below
- Freezer temperature should be around -15°C and -18°C
- Clean out refrigerator regularly
- Only use foods within the use-by dates
- Avoid foods in damaged containers or packaging
- Keep raw foods separate from cooked and ready-to-eat foods. NB Ready-to-eat foods are foods that can be eaten without further preparation or cooking such as prepared salads, sandwiches etc
- Store foods in clean containers with tight fitted lids or wrap in foil or plastic film
- Store allergens foods separately in dry goods area, fridge or freezer
- Store raw foods below cooked foods in the fridge to prevent contamination
- Thoroughly wash and dry hands before preparing food and after handling raw meats, chicken, seafood, eggs, and unwashed vegetables
- Wear disposable gloves
- Any cuts or wounds on hands or arms are to be completely covered with brightly coloured wound strip or bandage. If the wound is on the hands disposable gloves must be worn over the top of the wound strip
- Both the wound strip and gloves must be changed at least hourly or sooner if there is a change in task.

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- Use separate and clean utensils and equipment for raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods. E.g., chopping boards, serving tongs and knives
- Use a colour coded system for chopping boards serving tongs and knives for raw meat, cooked vegetables and dairy
- Use separate cooking utensils dedicated for allergens
- Use a colour coded, clearly labelled system for identification and serving of allergens
- Ensure all eating and drinking utensils, and preparation surfaces are effectively cleaned and sanitised prior and after use
- Babies' bottles are to be stored in the fridge
- All cooks who are preparing food must wear an apron at all times and demonstrate personal cleanliness tie long hair back or cover it with a cap or other approved headwear
- Wear limited jewellery
- Store personal items and spare clothes away from any areas involving food handling.

Feeding Bottles

Feeding bottles accompanying children to a service are considered potentially hazardous food. The correct storage and handling of feeding bottles will ensure the milk remains safe and suitable for consumption.

- All feeding bottles accompanying children to the service are to be labelled with the child's name
- All feeding bottles must be sighted and the date and time of receipt documented and placed immediately into the designated refrigerator
- Any unnamed milk, unrefrigerated milk or milk that has been out of the refrigerator for an unknown period should be discarded
- Breast milk can be stored in a refrigerator for up to 48 hours or in the freezer for 3 months
- To prevent the growth of food poisoning bacteria, feeding bottles are to be kept cold until needed
- It is recommended that parents prepare all formula mixes for bottles
- Frozen breast milk must be thawed quickly, but not placed into boiling water as it will curdle
- Place the bottle/container under cold running water and gradually increase the water temperature until the milk becomes liquid
- Wash hands thoroughly and make sure preparation area is clean
- Stand the bottle in a container of hot (not boiling) water for 10 minutes and heat until appropriate (body temperature)
- A microwave is not to be used to heat bottles due to possible uneven heating. 'Hot spots' in the bottle can scald the infant's mouth
- Test the temperature by dropping a little milk onto the inside of your wrist – it should be body temperature.
- Serve the bottles to children immediately
- Heat bottles **once only**
- Any breast milk or formula not consumed is to be discarded.

Responsible consumption of hot liquids at the service

Scalds and burns from hot liquids are a common cause of hospital admission in 0- to 4-year-olds. A child's skin is thinner and more sensitive than an adult's and will therefore experience a more severe burn (refer to *Reference/sources: Burns & Scalds Kidsafe Fact sheet*). <https://www.kidsafevic.com.au/home-safety/fire-safety-burns-and-scalds/> Children's natural curiosity, impulsiveness, mode of reaction and lack of experience in assessing danger are contributing factors to the vulnerability of children at this age.

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Common scenarios that can lead to a child being scalded include when a child pulls a cup of tea, coffee or hot water from a table or bench, or when a child runs into a person holding a hot drink or soup, resulting in the hot liquid spilling over the child's body.

The consumption of warm or lukewarm drinks or the use of lidded cups/mugs in areas accessed by children is **acceptable**.

General guidelines

The Approved Provider, Responsible Person and all staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring that hot drinks/soups are only prepared and consumed in areas inaccessible to children, such as the kitchen, staffroom, and office (where no children are present – enrolled or visiting)
- Ensuring that hot liquids are not consumed in, or taken into or through, children's rooms, outdoor areas, or any other area where children are in attendance or participating in the program
- Informing parents on duty, visitors to the service, students, volunteers, and any other person participating in the program of the service's hot drink procedures and the reasons for such procedures
- Ensuring that children enrolled and participating in the program do not have access to areas of the building that are likely to be hazardous, including the kitchen, staffroom, and office
- Ensuring that parents attending the service actively supervise children in their care who are not enrolled in the program, including siblings
- Ensuring that at least one educator with current approved first aid qualifications is in attendance and immediately available at all times that children are being educated and cared for by the service
- Educating service users about the prevention of burns and scalds by providing relevant information, including appropriate first aid for scalds
- Implementing safety procedures in relation to hot drinks at service events occurring outside operational hours, including:
 - Offering alternative drinks for adults e.g., water or 100% fruit juice
 - Safely locating urns, kettles, and power cords out of reach of children
 - Preparing and consuming hot drinks in an area inaccessible to children
 - Ensuring a person with current approved first aid qualifications is in attendance for social events held outside operational hours.

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