

BALLARAT YMCA CHILDREN'S SERVICES NUTRITION, ORAL HEALTH AND ACTIVE PLAY POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

June 2015

PURPOSE

Ballarat YMCA – Y Kindergarten Children's Services (YMCA) acknowledges the importance of healthy eating, oral health and physical activity, and its contribution to good health and overall wellbeing.

This policy will provide guidelines to:

- promote a healthy lifestyle to children at the service, including eating nutritious food, participating in physical activity and maintaining good oral health
- provide opportunities for active play
- encourage children to make healthy lifestyle choices consistent with national and state guidelines and recommendations, including maintaining good oral health
- ensure that the dietary and cultural needs of children and families are taken into consideration when planning menus for service events and activities.
- As a health promoting service we will promote healthy eating, active play / physical activity and oral health to children, educators, staff and families through learning, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment and developing community links and partnerships.
- Encourage staff to provide a positive role model by eating healthily in front of the children, showing an awareness of healthy UV exposure and engaging in smoke free practices.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

YMCA is committed to:

- promoting nutritious food and eating habits that will contribute to healthy growth and development and good oral health in children
- providing a safe, supportive and social environment in which children can enjoy eating
- consulting and working collaboratively with families in regard to 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 and offered as fundraisers are consistent with national and state 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
- encouraging physical activity by providing a range of active play experiences for all children at the service.
- Promoting breastfeeding and ensuring mothers have a quiet comfortable place to breastfeed if required
- Ensuring educators, staff, families and children are key partners in developing and promoting healthy eating, good oral health and active play

2. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

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 and development. Being made aware of positive eating behaviour, the importance of physical activity and maintaining oral health from an early age can instil good habits that will remain throughout a person's life. Educators/staff are well placed to build this awareness among children and their families, while respecting lifestyle choices, and cultural and religious values.



Healthy eating (nutrition)

The foods we eat provide our body with the nutrients we need to stay healthy. Good nutrition is the balanced eating of a variety of foods, and is especially important for children as they require a large amount of nutrients for growth and development. Research has shown that, when offered a variety of healthy foods, children can and do make good choices. It is also important to provide preschool children with a good foundation in healthy eating, as most children have formed lifelong eating habits before they reach school age. Education and care settings provide many opportunities for children to experience a range of healthy food, and to learn about food choices from educators and other children (*Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, p30).

Oral health

Oral health behaviours have a major influence on children's health and wellbeing and a direct impact on their growth and development. Oral diseases can negatively affect individuals through pain, discomfort, general health and quality of life. Poor oral health can limit a child's capacity in biting, chewing, smiling, speaking and psychosocial 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 note that oral health promotion is complementary to promoting healthy eating.

Active play

Active play (play that involves using the large muscles in the body) develops a strong and healthy body, builds motor and co-ordination skills, creates a sense of wellbeing and helps protect from disease. Active play is about moving, being and doing.

A strong sense of health and wellbeing, supported by good nutrition and an active lifestyle, can provide children with confidence, energy and optimism that will contribute to their ability to concentrate, co-operate and learn (*Belonging, Being & Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia*, p30 – refer to Sources). Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition and active play, links directly to Outcome 3 in both the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*, and *My Time, Our Place*.

The Australian Government has produced guidelines, recommendations and resources for healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood settings, including the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia* (refer to Sources) and the *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood* resources (refer to Sources). Practical, healthy eating advice is also available to early childhood services and schools via a telephone advice line: the Healthy Eating Advisory Service (Healthy Together Healthy Eating Advisory Service -refer to Sources), run by Nutrition Australia. Early childhood education and care services are encouraged to register for and implement the Healthy Together Achievement Program (refer to sources). This program is designed to create safe, healthy, challenging and supportive environments for learning, by promoting physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

3. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy.

Active play: Large muscle-based activities that is essential for a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth and development.

- **Child-initiated active play** is developed by the child through exploration of the outdoor environment, equipment and games
- **Adult-guided active play** encourages children's physical development through promoting movement skills in a non-competitive environment
- Physical activity includes sport, incidental exercise and many forms of recreation

Adequate supervision: (In relation to this policy) **supervision** entails all children (individuals and groups) in all areas of the service, being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines. Services are required to comply with the legislative requirements for educator-to-child ratios at all times. Supervision contributes to protecting children from hazards that may emerge in play, including hazards created by the equipment used.

Adequate supervision refers to constant, active and diligent supervision of every child at the service. Adequate supervision requires that educators are always in a position to observe each child, respond to individual needs, and immediately intervene if necessary. Variables affecting supervision levels include:

- number, age and abilities of children
- number and positioning of educators
- current activity of each child
- areas in which the children are engaged in an activity (visibility and accessibility)
- developmental profile of each child and of the group of children
- experience, knowledge and skill of each educator
- need for educators to move between areas (effective communication strategies).

Healthy eating: Describes eating patterns that provide all the recommended nutrients for growth and development, and good health and wellbeing, now and in the future. It also refers to preparing, serving and eating food in a way that recognises its importance as a social and cultural activity.

Nutrition: The process of providing or receiving nourishing substances.

Oral Health: Eating, speaking and socialising without discomfort or embarrassment.

'Sometimes' foods and drinks: Food and drink items that are high in fat, sugar and salt, and that contain minimal vitamins, minerals or fibre.

PROCEDURES

The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports staff, educators, children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play.
- ensuring that any sponsorship, advertisements or marketing of food and drinks are consistent with the services healthy eating and oral health policies. Fundraising activities reflect the oral health policy and promote healthy lifestyle messages, for example fundraising using toothpaste and toothbrushes, fruit and vegetable boxes direct from growers etc
- Children undertake oral hygiene practices in the service where appropriate
- ensuring the implementation of adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children being educated and cared for by the service (Regulation 770)
- ensuring that all educators/staff comply with the *Food Safety Act*
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment or on initial diagnosis
- ensuring measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Diabetes Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*)
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of, and plan for, the dietary needs of children diagnosed with diabetes
- ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times. Only water and plain milk are encouraged.
- ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b))
- ensuring that cultural and religious practices/requirements of families are accommodated to support children's learning and development
- organising celebrations, fundraising activities and other service events in consultation with educators, staff, parents/guardians and families. Chocolate or lolly drives are not appropriate fund raising events.
- developing links with local and regional health services, community organisations and businesses that provide expertise, resources and support for healthy eating, oral health and active play and if appropriate, registering with and implementing the *Healthy Together Achievement Program*

- ensuring that educators, staff, families and children are active participants in the development and implementation of the whole service *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy*
- ensuring that food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe or reward at any time
- ensuring educators are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to develop adult guided and child initiated active play experiences and promote healthy eating and oral health.
- ensuring staff and educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning.

Certified Supervisors and other educators/staff are responsible for:

- complying with the service's *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy* and with the *Food Safety Act*
- implementing adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children (refer to *Hygiene Policy* and *Food Safety Policy*)
- being aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment at the service or on initial diagnosis
- implementing measures to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes
- being aware of, and planning for, the dietary needs of children diagnosed with diabetes
- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play
- discussing healthy eating choices with children and introducing the concept of 'every day' and 'sometimes' foods and drinks, and role-modelling positive behaviours
- providing opportunities at the centre that include healthy food options such as fruit and vegetables. These will also promote a range of flavours, colours and textures
- Educators and staff role-modelling positive eating and drinking behaviours
- exploring and discussing diverse cultural, religious, social and family lifestyles
- considering this policy when organising excursions and service events and any sponsorship or marketing opportunities
- supporting students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service
- keeping parents/guardians informed of current information relating to healthy eating, oral health and active play
- ensuring that fresh drinking water (preferably tap water) is readily available at all times, and reminding children to drink regularly throughout the day, including at snack/meal times ensuring that sometimes food and sweetened drinks (juices, cordials and soft drinks) are not provided by the service and are discouraged from being sent from home. Only water or plain milk is provided
- ensuring that children can readily access their own clearly labelled drink containers (where this is a service practice)
- providing food and drinks at regular intervals, and encouraging children to actively participate in, and enjoy, snack/meal times without feeling rushed
- discussing with children age appropriate tooth brushing and why it is important
- providing adequate supervision for all children during meal/snack times
- encouraging children to be independent at snack/meal times e.g. opening lunchboxes, pouring drinks, self-feeding, serving and using utensils in a culturally-sensitive way
- engaging children as active learners in healthy food, oral health and active play experiences
- involving children in healthy food experiences through growing, cooking and shopping
- providing families with information on oral hygiene and how and where to access local dental services.
- planning and providing outdoor, active play that is stimulating, promotes skill development, considers safety issues and provides adequate supervision
- considering opportunities for children to be physically active indoors, particularly in adverse weather conditions
- providing daily opportunities for all children to participate in age-appropriate active play

- acting as positive role models by engaging in physical activity
- providing age-appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and passenger safety to both children and parents/guardians at the service
- promoting active travel where appropriate and providing space at the centre for families to leave active travel equipment
- promoting safe behaviour through daily practice as part of the program.
- ensuring that screen based activities, such as watching DVDs or playing computer games, are not available to children under two years of age.
- ensuring that screen time is limited for toddlers and preschoolers (aged two to five years).
- ensuring that active play is promoted instead of offering screen time.
- ensuring that the time children spend being seated or inactive, other than during meal or naptime, is limited.
- ensuring that educators engage with children about the content of what they are viewing and respond to their reactions
- aiming to identify and address barriers for active travel within the local environment.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- complying with the requirements of this policy
- providing details of specific nutritional/dietary requirements, including the need to accommodate cultural or religious practices or food allergies, on their child's enrolment form, and discussing these with the Nominated Supervisor prior to the child's commencement at the service, and if requirements change over time (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy* and *Diabetes Policy*)
- communicating regularly with educators/staff regarding children's specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences
- encouraging their child/ren to drink an adequate amount of water
- encouraging children to undertake recommended oral hygiene practices (assisting children to brush teeth twice daily, after breakfast and before bed) in the home
- taking children for oral health check-ups by the age of two.
- providing healthy, nutritious food for snacks/meals, including fruits and vegetables where applicable
- providing healthy, nutritious food, including fruits or vegetables for sharing at morning or afternoon tea, where applicable
- providing nutritious food and drinks for celebrations, fundraising activities and service events, consistent with service policy
- encouraging children to exercise by engaging in active play, and walking or riding a bike to the service where appropriate
- discussing appropriate road traffic safety and car safety practices, and role-modelling this behaviour.

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

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by YMCA on 18st June 2015.

