

Early Learning

Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play

Overarching Statement

The Keeping Children Safe Policy of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (*refer to Sources*) is the overarching whole of church policy to be implemented by individuals and entities involved with or connected to the Uniting Church. All children who are involved in any of the Church’s activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

Policy Statement

Uniting Early Learning is committed to:

- 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 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 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.

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Executive Summary

Uniting Early Learning acknowledges the importance of embedding healthy eating, oral health and physical activity into everyday programs. 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.

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.

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.

Current Environmental Context

The responsibilities of each relevant party are noted at Attachment 1a.

Attachment 1a: Responsibilities relating to the Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy

References/Sources

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

Keeping Children Safe Policy of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Approved June 2015:
<https://www.victas.uca.org.au/UCA%20Resources/Documents/Keeping%20Children%20Safe%20Policy.pdf>

- *Anaphylaxis Policy*
- *Asthma Policy*
- *Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy*
- *Dealing with Medical Conditions Policy*
- *Diabetes Policy*
- *Educational Program and Practice Policy*
- *Excursions Regular Outings and Service Events Policy*
- *Food Safety Policy*
- *Hygiene Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*

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Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Achievement Program: www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au
- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code
- Australian Breastfeeding Association www.breastfeeding.asn.au
- *Australian Dietary Guidelines* (2013) National Health and Medical Research Council: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/n55>
- Better health Channel www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Cavallini, I and Tedeschi, M (eds) (2008), *The Languages of Food: recipes, experiences, thoughts* Reggio Children Publications
- *Children’s Services Regulations 2009*: Regulations: 79, 80, 81
- Dental Health Services Victoria – includes resources on oral health: www.DHSV.org.au
- Early Learning Association Australia – Road Safety Education https://elaa.org.au/services_resources/our_services
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: Regulations 77–78, 79–80 (if the service provides food), 168
- *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 www.foodstandards.gov.au
- *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood*: www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-early-childhood-nutrition-resources
- Healthy Eating Advisory Service: <http://heas.health.vic.gov.au/> phone 1300 225 288 or email heas@nutritionaustralia.org
- *Infant Feeding Guidelines* (2013) National Health and Medical Research Council : <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/n56>
- Keeping Children Safe Policy of the Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Approved June 2015: <http://victasintranet/hr/Documents/Keeping%20Children%20Safe%20Policy.pdf>
- Kids and Traffic – Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program: www.kidsandtraffic.mq.edu.au
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety
- Nitzke, S, Riley, D, Ramming, A and Jacobs, G (2010), *Rethinking Nutrition: Connecting Science and Practice in Early Childhood Settings*. Redleaf Press, St Paul, USA
- Nutrition Australia-*Healthy eating in the National Quality Standard*: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/regulation/2016-04-28%20Draft%20Healthy%20Eating%20National%20Quality%20Standard%20DET%20branding%20June%20NA%20final.pdf>

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Authorisation

This policy was adopted by Uniting Early Childhood Services on 22 March 2017

Review:

This policy is due for review by 22 March 2018

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Attachment 1a - Responsibilities relating to the Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy

National Regulations & Act

AP=Approved Provider

NS=Nominated Supervisor

CS=Certified Supervisor

Victorian Regulations & Act

L=Licensee

PN=Primary Nominee

N=Nominee

Action	Approved Provider/ Licensee	NS & PN	CS, N and Educators	Parents
Ensure that the service environment and educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play	x	x		
Ensure that all educators/staff are aware of a child's food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment or on initial diagnosis	x	x		
Ensure that all educators/staff are aware of, and plan for, the dietary needs of children diagnosed with diabetes	x	x		
Ensure measures are in place to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes	x	x		
Provide ongoing information, resources and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including oral health, for young children	x	x		
Ensure that all educators/staff comply with the <i>Food Safety Act</i>	x	x		
Ensure that celebrations, fundraising activities and other service events are consistent with the purposes and values of this policy and service procedures	x	x		
Provide healthy suggestions for morning/afternoon tea and/or lunchboxes for children in line with Australian Dietary Guidelines	x	x		
Discourage parents from providing children with 'discretionary choices' (see <i>Glossary</i>)	x	x		
Ensure that fresh drinking water is readily available at all times, at frequent and regular intervals and remind children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times. Hydration on hot days is especially important	x	x	x	
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.	x	x		
Where food is provided at the service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allocate finances to ensure the provision of nutritionally-balanced and culturally-sensitive meals, as required • 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 • ensure that food and drink provided by the service is nutritious, adequate in 	x			

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<p>quantity and appropriate to children’s growth and development, and meets any specific cultural, religious or health needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 . 				
<p>Where food is provided at the service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> manage the service’s food budget 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 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 ensure that the service is registered and working in line with the Food Safety Act and National Regulations ensure that the cook, and any staff involved in food preparation, serving and storage, comply with the Food Safety Act facilitate training of staff to assist in compliance with the Food Safety Act e.g. safe food handling courses display menus, share recipes and encourage feedback about the food provided at the service 		x		
Ensure that cultural and religious practices/requirements of families are accommodated to support children’s learning and development		x		
Develop and review guidelines for celebrations, fundraising activities, sponsorship and other service events in consultation with educators, staff, parents and families		x		
Develop 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		x		
Staff & educators are supported by having healthy food options in the staff room, for staff meetings and for professional learning		x	x	
Food and drink are not used as an incentive, bribe or reward at any time		x	x	
Comply with this Policy and with the <i>Food Safety Act</i>			x	
The service engages in walking excursions within the local community that promotes physical activity and safe active travel		x	x	
Implement adequate health and hygiene procedures, and safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, to minimise risks to children (refer to <i>Hygiene Policy</i> and <i>Food Safety Policy</i>)			x	
Be aware of a child’s food allergies and/or other medical conditions on enrolment at the service or on initial diagnosis			x	
Implement measures to prevent cross-contamination of any food given to children with diagnosed food allergies and/or diabetes			x	
Be aware of, and planning for, the dietary needs of children diagnosed with diabetes			x	

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Discuss healthy eating choices with children, introduce the concept of discretionary choices (see <i>Glossary</i>), and role-model positive behaviours			x	
Explore and discuss diverse cultural, religious, social and family lifestyles			x	
Consider this policy when organising excursions and service events			x	
Support students and volunteers to comply with this policy while at the service			x	
Keep parents informed of current information relating to healthy eating, oral health and active play			x	
Ensure that children can readily access their own clearly labelled drink containers (where this is a service practice)			x	
Provide food and drinks at regular intervals, and encourage children to actively participate in, and enjoy, snack/meal times without feeling rushed			x	
Provide opportunities for children to learn about and develop skills for oral health through the educational program			x	
Provide adequate supervision for all children during meal/snack times and where appropriate implement a dental hygiene program			x	
Encourage children in a culturally-sensitive way to be independent at snack/meal times e.g. opening lunchboxes, pouring drinks, self-feeding, serving and using utensils			x	
Involve children in healthy food experiences through growing, cooking and shopping	x	x	x	
Plan and provide outdoor, active play that is stimulating, promotes skill development, considers safety issues and ensures adequate supervision			x	
Consider opportunities for children to be physically active indoors, particularly in adverse weather conditions			x	
Provide daily opportunities for all children to participate in age-appropriate active play			x	
Act as positive role models by engaging in physical activity			x	
Minimise and closely supervise screen-based activities, in line with recommended guidelines			x	
Provide age-appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and passenger safety, to both children and parents at the service			x	
Promote safe behaviour through daily practice as part of the program			x	
Comply with the requirements of this policy				x
Provide 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 discuss these prior to the child's commencement at the service, and if requirements change over time				x
Communicate regularly with educators/staff regarding children's and families specific nutritional requirements and dietary needs, including food preferences				x
Where applicable, provide healthy, nutritious food, including fruits and vegetables, for snacks/meals; for sharing at morning or afternoon tea; for celebrations,				x

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fundraising activities and service events, consistent with service policy				
Encourage children to exercise by engaging in active play, and walking or riding a bike to the service where appropriate				x
Implement a dental care program and where appropriate, include brushing teeth		x	x	
Provide a welcoming, appropriate and comfortable breastfeeding space for mothers to breastfeed or express milk within the service	x	x	x	x
Promote walking excursions within the local community that promotes physical activity as part of the program		x		
Ensure the service is aware of and trained in procedures for preparing, heating and storing bottles of formula and breast milk	x	x		
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		x	x	
Recommended for services participating in the Achievement Program				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register the service with the <i>Achievement Program</i> • Where food is provided at the service, the menu is reviewed by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service and meets the criteria determined • The service aims to identify and address barriers for active travel within the local environment • Space is provided at the service for children to leave active travel equipment 	x	x	x	

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

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