Sturt Street Community Early Learning Centre

Nutrition Policy

Link to NQA Principles
National Regulations 78 – 80 , 168 Quality Area 2 Children’s Health and Safety ; Standard 2.1.3; Effective hygiene practices are promoted and implemented. Standard 2.2.1 Healthy eating is promoted and food and drinks provided by the service are nutritious and appropriate for each child.

References / Sources
- Guidelines for Food and Nutrition Policy in Child Care Centres: www.chdf.org.au
- Feeding and nutrition of infants and Young children: World Health Organisation 2000
- Australian Breast feeding Association Guidelines
- National Health and Medical Research Council (2003). Food for Health: Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia.
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand : www.foodstandards.gov.au
- Preventing Choking on Food : Information for Families and carers; SA Health fact Sheet 2011

The policy is reviewed annually as part of the Food Safety audit and Start Right Eat Right accreditation.

INTRODUCTION:
Sturt Street Community Early Learning Centre is responsible for providing a safe, healthy, caring and nurturing environment for children from infancy to 5 years. We aim to not only provide adequate nutrition but also to promote and encourage the establishment of good food habits early in life. Fostering healthy eating habits and activity patterns in childhood can reduce the prevalence of lifestyle diseases. We believe that well-nourished and active children are more likely to be alert, vigorous and happy.

As children in long day care can receive 50% of their food intake while in care, the Service believes we have a unique opportunity to develop positive food attitudes and practices through role modelling and teaching. Consequently, meal times are viewed as part of the children’s daily learning experiences. Eating with other children helps promote self-reliance and social skills. It encourages children to acquire a greater knowledge of and liking for a variety of foods.

While the Service recognises that parents have overall responsibility for their child’s nutrition, the Service believes it has an obligation to provide adequate nutrition proportionate to the time spent in care.

Information about nutrition is in the parent handbook and the full policy is available in the policy folder in each child care room. Relevant information from the nutrition policy about each age group is in the appropriate room’s information booklet. (E.g. baby room pamphlet will have information about the introduction of solids). It is the leadership’s responsibility to ensure that information is kept current and up to date, and that reliable sources have been sourced.

We advise all parents of our nutrition and food safety policy as part of the enrolment process – with the Director, Assistant Director and Team leaders ensuring that this advice is provided when discussing children’s dietary and nutritional needs.

The Centre’s Cook and the Director ensure that they are up to date with current nutritional and food safety information by attending training including the Start Right Eat Right training course every 4 years and liaising with our food safety auditor at annual visits and in between visits as necessary. We read updates from Start Right Eat Right and ensure these are available for all staff.

AIMS:
- To meet the nutritional needs of the children whilst in care by ensuring that each child receives sufficient and adequate food to enable full participation in the day’s activities.
- To encourage good eating habits by providing a nutritionally balanced diet based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines for Children.

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• To communicate effectively with families about their child’s food and nutrition and encourage parents to participate in the nutrition program.
• To reflect our multicultural diversity in the menu by including foods and dishes from many cultures.
• To take account of children on special or different diets e.g. religious or medical reasons, or a vegetarian lifestyle.
• To serve attractive, well presented meals, in a relaxed and pleasant environment which encourages independence and the development of social skills.
• To maintain high levels of hygiene and food safety.
• To provide up-to-date resources and information on nutrition for parents, staff and children and to integrate nutrition education into the curriculum.
• To evaluate the nutrition program and food service regularly taking into consideration feedback from parents and children.
• To promote the benefits of breastfeeding by providing information about breastfeeding, facilities for nursing mothers and the recommended storage thawing and warming of breast milk.
• To provide a healthy, nutritious and varied menu for babies and children.
• To provide positive experiences for children to learn about nutrition, experience different foods and to be involved in food preparation and positive meal time routines.

Menu Planning
We offer regular and frequent meals and snacks. The cook plans the menu, taking into account:
• the nutritional needs outlined in the Start Right / Eat Right Program,
• the menu will provide at least 50% of the Recommended Dietary Intake for key nutrients.
• the availability and cost of different foods,
• the colour, flavour, texture and taste of foods to provide a wide variety of meals which are attractive to children,
• the dental health of the children by avoiding foods which are sugary and sticky and cause dental decay,
• the program and events planned for the week,
• water and milk are offered to drink, (Refer to Guidelines for Fluids allowed for babies and 1 – 5 year olds – Appendix 1)
• full-cream milk is used for children under 2 years;   low fat milk and dairy products are used for all children over 2 years.
• mono-unsaturated and Omega-3 fats are recommended and used,
• low salt foods are used and no salt is added to foods,
• foods containing Calcium and Iron are offered daily , and
• artificial colourings are flavours are avoided.

The menu is planned on a 1 week cycle incorporating; 2 red meat dishes; 1 fish dish; 1 chicken dish; 1 vegetarian meal high in protein i.e. eggs, beans.

Feeding Infants.
1. Breastfeeding is encouraged for all infants in the first 12 months. The Service offers families advice about the benefits of breast feeding and also offers nursing mothers a quiet space to feed their child and facilities for the storage of breast milk.
2. We follow Start Right Eat Right recommended procedures for the storing, thawing and warming of breast milk and infant formula. (Appendix 2)
3. It is recommended that solids be introduced to infants’ diet from 6 months, beginning with smooth and pureed foods introducing one new food at a time. The Service follows the Start Right Eat Right recommended schedule for introducing solids to infants ( Appendix 3)
4. It is particularly important to have good communication with families during the time when children are being introduced to solids. Staff will communicate to parents the types, amounts and textures of foods offered to children during care and will seek this information from parents as well to help maintain consistency between feeding practices at home and in care.

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Food Safety

1. **Nut Allergies**: As many children have allergies to nuts in particular, nuts and nut products are not used in the Service. Parents are asked not to provide nuts for their children whilst at the centre. Please refer to nut and allergens awareness policy.

2. **Choking hazards**: Due to the risk of choking whole grapes and hard foods such as chunks of raw vegetables e.g. raw carrots are not offered to children. Raw apples and celery are not offered to children under 4 years. When offered to children apples are thinly sliced or grated. Fat on meat and sausage skin is removed, before or after cooking due to the increased risk of choking. (Reference: Preventing choking fact sheet; SA Health, 2011)

Food Storage and Preparation

1. Hygiene standards, as per legislation, are adhered to at all times. The kitchen, including food preparation areas are kept hygienically clean see Food Safety Plan (Appendix 4).
2. Regular audit and maintenance of facilities is undertaken to reduce the risk of hazards – see Food Safety Plan.
3. Fruit and vegetables are washed prior to being cut up and served to children or used in cooking.
4. Staff and children wash their hands before and after meals or when preparing food.
5. Tables are washed with soap and water before and after meals or food preparation.
6. Food scraps are collected and disposed of in a hygienic manner.
7. Staff who are preparing food will have their hair tied back neatly and covered with a hat or bandana.
8. All staff will be trained in food hygiene and complete the Bug Busters program as a group or individually. Questionnaires are given to staff to assess their knowledge and understanding of food handling and hygiene. Staff complete this program within one month of starting at the centre.
9. Staff, especially the cook, will be encouraged to access workshops reflecting new hygiene and food preparation legislation.

The Curriculum

Meal Times.

1. Meal times are considered part of the educational curriculum and overall learning environment of the Service. Meal times are an enjoyable part of the children’s daily learning experiences. Children can be involved in mealtime tasks.
2. During meals and snacks, children sit in groups with staff in a calm and pleasant atmosphere. Children are required to remain seated whilst eating and care is taken to ensure children are well-supervised.
3. A positive approach is to be used to support children to try a range of food. The focus needs to be on what children are eating rather than over emphasis on what they are not eating. All children are encouraged to try their main meal before being offered bread. The Service will not offer food substitutes, unless by arrangement with families as part of an eating plan, as this does not encourage a nutritionally balanced diet, or model appropriate future lifestyle habits.
4. Children are offered more food once they have eaten the first serve, and staff will continue to provide food for the child until they indicate they do not want any more.
5. A late snack will be offered to the children that are at the centre after 5pm.
Families and nutrition.

We encourage parents to:

- promote sensible eating habits with their children,
- be a part of the educational programming by joining cooking activities or special events
- provide the cook with favourite recipes,
- give feedback on the menu which is displayed in each room,
- make the Service aware of children’s dietary requirements upon enrolment, and to keep in contact about children’s changing needs and food preferences
- observe the nut and allergens awareness policy.

- Children’s eating habits and food intake are monitored by staff.
  - In the babies room information re food intake and timing of meals is provided each day to parents on the daily notes.
  - In the toddler room information re food intake is provided via the whiteboard.
  - In the Kindy room any issues re food intake are reported as they arise through verbal feedback or a phone call or a written note in the child’s note pocket.
  - Across all areas where there are concerns about children’s eating, carers will make a time to meet with parents about the issue and where necessary document special arrangements. Parents are notified if their child has not eaten during the day, or of concerns about repeated patterns of eating that are detrimental to the child.

Food experiences:

Children will have the opportunity to take part in experiences and learning about nutrition such as cooking experiences, picking herbs and vegetables from the school garden, reading posters, books and other texts that focus on nutrition and learning important information about nutrition and food safety through songs and rhymes.

Special Diets:

Information is sought from parents about their children’s diets on enrolment.

1. Medical reasons: Children may require a special diet due to medical reasons – e.g. food allergies or food intolerances. We seek written information from a medical practitioner regarding allergies and intolerances using a health care plan. (Appendix 5)

2. Non medical reasons: Parents may request a special diet due to cultural/religious or lifestyle preferences. We ask parents to fill out a special diet form in these instances to enable us to document and plan for these preferences. Parents also have the option to provide meals and food from home. (Appendix 6)

We will provide for children’s diets with alternative meals which will be clearly labelled with the child’s name when delivered to the child care rooms. Where an alternative meal (rather than an adaptation of the day’s recipe is required) this will be listed on the weekly menu.

Special Occasions

The Service understands that food is often used to signal celebration in many cultures, however parents are asked to consider nutrition and food safety when providing any food to share for special occasions. If birthday cakes are provided, simple and wholesome cakes with moderate sugar levels are recommended – for instance banana, apple and carrot or plain sponge cakes. A list of ingredients must accompany the cake. Cakes containing alcohol, coffee or nuts will not be served to children. Suitable alternative foods to cake are low fat ice cream served in a plain cone, fruit platter or dips and crackers.

Centre staff will provide other ways of celebrating birthdays that will help children feel special.

Fund raising and family events:

At our service we believe that all events and activities promoted through the centre need to keep nutrition and food safety as a high priority. Therefore in planning for events healthy nutritious options will be provided. The Start Right Eat right Fundraising ideas for child care centres (Appendix 7) will be used when planning events, including fundraising, family gatherings and excursions.

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