



Parkdale Preschool Association Inc A-0003637F

NUTRITION, ORAL HEALTH AND ACTIVE PLAY POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

Parkdale Preschool 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, maintain oral health and participate in physical activity
- ensure national and state guidelines and recommendations about nutrition, oral health and physical activity are met
- provide opportunities for active play
- encourage children to make healthy lifestyle choices consistent with national and state guidelines and recommendations
- ensure that the dietary and cultural needs of children and families are taken into consideration when planning menus for service events, oral health and activities.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Parkdale Preschool is committed to:

- ensuring national and state guidelines and recommendations about nutrition, oral health and physical activity are met
- promoting nutritious food and eating habits that will contribute to healthy growth and development 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, dietary requirements and oral health, 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 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
- ensuring staff and educators have access to resources and support for their own healthy eating and physical activity.
- encouraging physical activity by providing a range of active play experiences for all children at the service.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Parkdale Preschool.

3. 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, oral hygiene practices and the importance of physical activity 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.

As a health promoting service it is recognised that every member of the service impacts on children's health. Children, staff, educators and families can be supported to eat healthily, maintain good oral health and be physically active through teaching and learning opportunities, policies, creating a safe and healthy physical and social environment and developing community links and partnerships.

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 – refer to Sources).

Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program

Parkdale Preschool is a member of the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden (SAKG) Program. When a child is regularly engaged in activities in the garden and kitchen, and then invited and encouraged to the table to taste and learn about nutritious food, then that child will grow to embrace fresh, seasonal flavours and will learn more about the natural world and how it relates to others. That child will look forward to a healthy future. This program is embedded in the preschool curriculum for all the children in the three and four-year-old groups and aims to promote positive food behaviours as children learn about how to grow, cook and eat fresh, nutritious food. The children will be developing and refining their physical skills and coordination as they are hands on in every aspect of planting, gardening and cooking. This program also provides opportunities for team work and promotes positive self-esteem, a sense of agency and respect for the environment and sustainable practices.

Oral Health

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.

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.

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* (refer to *Sources*).

The Australian Government has produced guidelines, recommendations and resources for healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood settings (refer to *Sources*). Early childhood education and care services can also register for the *Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program* (refer to *Sources*). This program is designed to create safe, healthy and friendly environments for learning, by promoting physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

Progressive meal times

In recognising children as active participants in their own learning, children should be encouraged to make meaningful decisions about elements of their own education and care. Incorporating progressive snack times into the educational program allows children to choose to eat when they are hungry, rather than according to a timetable. Children can gather in small groups to enjoy meals together, without interrupting the needs and play of others. Children can make decisions based on their own needs, and can be supported to access food and water throughout the day by educators/staff, who actively participate in meal times.

A decision with respect to incorporating progressive meal times into the educational program must take into account the needs of all children at the service, particularly children with specific medical conditions such as diabetes. The National Regulations require services to ensure that children with medical conditions are able to participate fully in the educational program, and are not discriminated against in any way.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 77–78, 79–80 (if the service provides food), 168*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Food Act 1984 (Vic), as amended 2012*
- *National Quality Standard, Quality Area 2: Children’s Health and Safety*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – Comlaw: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/>

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Active play: Large muscle-based activities that are essential for a child’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical growth and development incorporating:

- child-initiated active play, which is developed by the child through exploration of the outdoor environment, equipment and games
- adult-guided active play which encourages children's physical development through promoting movement skills in a non-competitive environment
- physical activity, which 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: The absence of active disease in the mouth. It affects overall well-being and enables people to participate and socialise 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.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health 2011 'Dental caries trends in Australian school children' *Australian Dental Journal* Vol 56, pp 227-30
- *Australian Dietary Guidelines* (2013) National Health and Medical Research Council: www.nhmrc.gov.au ([Search Guidelines and publications under A-Z](#))
- *Belonging, Being & Becoming – Early Years Learning Framework for Australia:*
- 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
- Dental Health Services Victoria – includes resources on oral health: www.dhsv.org.au
- Food Safety Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/foodsafety 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
- *The Achievement Program* is a health and wellbeing initiative for early childhood services, schools and workplaces: www.achievementprogram.health.vic.gov.au
- Healthy Eating Advisory Service: www.heas.health.vic.gov.au

- *Infant Feeding Guidelines* (2013) National Health and Medical Research Council: www.nhmrc.gov.au
- Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years (Birth to 5 years): www.health.gov.au
- 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
- Oberklaid, F (2004), *Health in Early Childhood Settings: From Emergencies to the Common Cold*. Pademelon Press, NSW
- *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* (5th edition, 2013) National Health and Medical Research Council: www.nhmrc.gov.au ([Search A-Z listings of all resources and type title into 'Filter by key word'](#))
Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
- Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation <https://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/>

Service policies

- *Anaphylaxis Policy*
- *Asthma Policy*
- *Dealing with Infectious Diseases Policy*
- *Diabetes Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Food Safety Policy*
- *Hygiene Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Sun Protection Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider and/or Nominated Supervisors are responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play
- providing ongoing information, resources and support to families, to assist in the promotion of optimum health, including oral health for young children (refer to *Sources*)
- recognising families, educators and staff as role models and encouraging them to bring/use foods and drinks that are in line with the service's Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy
- 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 77) (refer to *Hygiene Policy and Food Safety Policy*)
- ensuring that all educators/staff are aware of, and planning for, dietary needs of children diagnosed with food allergies and/or other medical conditions such as diabetes on enrolment at the service 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*). This includes encouraging parents to provide a note with any home baked items or pre-packaged items such as muesli bars stating that the anaphylaxis causing ingredient is not present.
- providing healthy suggestions for snacks and lunches for children. Lunch boxes could include a simple sandwich, fruit or vegetables and yogurt or cheese as snacks.
- discouraging parents/guardians from providing children with 'sometimes' foods and drinks (refer to *Definitions*)

- encourage all children to bring a drink bottle containing fresh drinking water and discouraging other drinks.
- ensuring that fresh drinking water is readily available at all times, and reminding children to drink water throughout the day, including at snack/lunch times (Regulation 78(1)(a))
- ensuring that food and drinks are available to children at frequent and regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b))
- developing and reviewing guidelines for celebrations, fundraising activities and other service events in consultation with educators, staff, parents/guardians and families
- supporting the educators to deliver the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program through appropriate training and resources

Educators/staff are responsible for:

- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to learn about and make healthy choices for eating, oral health and active play
- embedding opportunities to learn about healthy eating and oral health and the importance of physical activity in the educational program, throughout the year
- complying with the service's *Nutrition, Oral 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*)
- being aware of, and planning for, dietary needs of children diagnosed with food allergies, intolerances and/or other medical conditions such as diabetes 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 (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy, Asthma Policy, Diabetes Policy and Food Safety Policy*)
- ensuring that the service environment and the educational program supports children and families to make healthy choices for eating and active play
- discussing healthy eating choices with children, introducing the concept of 'sometimes' foods and drinks, and role-modelling positive behaviours
- exploring and discussing diverse cultural, religious, social and family lifestyles
- considering this policy when organising excursions and service events
- 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 (Regulation 78(1)(a)) and ensuring that children can readily access their own clearly labelled drink bottles.
- providing food and drinks at regular intervals throughout the day (Regulation 78(1)(b)), and encouraging children to actively participate in, and enjoy, snack/meal times without feeling rushed
- providing opportunities for children to learn about, and develop skills for oral health through the educational program
- 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
- providing daily opportunities for all children to participate in age-appropriate active play
- planning and providing outdoor, active play that is stimulating, promotes skill development, considers safety issues and provides adequate supervision (refer to *Definitions*)
- considering opportunities for children to be physically active indoors, particularly in adverse weather conditions
- acting as positive role models by engaging in physical activity
- minimising and closely supervising screen-based activities, in line with recommended guidelines

- providing age-appropriate traffic safety education, including pedestrian and passenger safety to both children and parents/guardians at the service

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 child's early childhood teacher prior to the child's commencement at the service, and if requirements change over time (refer to *Anaphylaxis Policy*, *Asthma Policy*, *Dealing with Medical Conditions 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 (preferably tap water)
- providing healthy, nutritious food for snacks/meals, including fruits and vegetables 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.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from educators, staff, parents/guardians, children, management and all affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any change to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Parkdale Preschool on September 2018

REVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 2019