

Title	ELC and SACS Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements Policy
Description of policy	Outlines requirements for Early Learning Centres and School Age Care services to ensure they can meet nutrition, health and hygiene needs of enrolled children.
Required because	Early Learning (ELCs) and School Age Care services (SACS) are required to have policies and procedures in place in relation to nutrition, food, beverages, and dietary requirements and ensure: • Adequate health and hygiene practices including safe handling, preparing and storing food (r77) • Access to safe drinking water at all times and food and beverages appropriate to each child's needs on a regular basis throughout the day (r78) • The food and beverages are adequate in quantity, and chosen based on each child's dietary requirements (r79), and • That a weekly menu is displayed and accessible to family members, in ELCs and SACS that provide food on a regular basis (r80).
Description of changes	• Template food safety records for ELCs and SACS • Added links to a new Anaphylaxis fact sheet and food safety practices fact sheet • Updated roles and responsibilities
Applies to	☐ Organisation-wide ☒ ELCs & SACS ☐ Staff only ☐ Students only ☒ Staff and students
Status	☐ New ☐ Major revision of existing document ☒ Minor revision of existing document

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Related documents	ELC and SAC Medical Conditions and Administration of Medication Policy CECG Food safety records templates (for SACS/canteens) Food Handling checklist (for ELCs) Anaphylaxis and Food Ban Fact Sheet ELC and SAC safe food handling fact sheet
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1. Summary

- 1.1 CECG ELC and SACS must ensure they provide healthy foods and drinks that meet the [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) and comply with relevant food safety regulations including the [Food Act 2001](#) (ACT), [Food Regulation 2002](#) (ACT), and [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#).
- 1.2 CECG ELC and SACS are committed to promoting and supporting healthy food and drink choices for and with children to support their development and wellbeing. Dietary and healthy eating habits formed in the early years are shown to continue into adulthood and can reduce the risk factors associated with chronic adult conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. (r79)
- 1.3 CECG ELC and SACS prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of children, ensuring food handling, preparing and storing food, as well as providing food and beverages that are nutritious and adequate in quantity, and chosen based on each child's dietary and medical requirements.
- 1.4 CECG ELC and SACS value our families, their cultures, customs and religious traditions. ELC and SACS will work with families to ensure that the food and beverages provided to their children reflect their preferences.
- 1.5 CECG ELC and SACS incorporate children's agency and decision-making when planning mealtimes, menus and other food-related experiences that enable this opportunity.
- 1.6 CECG ELC and SACS must ensure they abide by the Education and Care Services National Regulations (r) as stated below:
 - Food is handled, prepared and stored safely at the service (r77)
 - Children always have access to safe drinking water (r78)
 - Nutritious food and beverages are offered on a regular basis throughout the day, appropriate to each child's needs and dietary requirements (r79), and
 - A weekly menu is displayed and accessible to family members, in ELC and SACS that provide food (r80).
- 1.7 All Educators should complete safe food handling practices ([I'm Alert Food Safety Training](#) or [Do Food Safely](#) in the ACT). This is a legal requirement for workers in food businesses and a CECG risk mitigation in ELCs that are not food businesses.

Food businesses

- 1.8 Services that provide meals as part of must their service are Food Businesses. They must register as a food business and comply with all Food Safety requirements for potentially hazardous foods (see [ELC and SAC safe food handling fact sheet](#)).
- 1.9 In CECG, this generally includes all SACs but not ELCs as they do not provide meals as part of their general services and children bring their own food. This applies even if ELCs occasionally do food preparation activities as part of the education curriculum.

2. Nutrition and Dietary Requirements and Allergy-Aware

- 2.1 ELC and SACS will provide children with a wide variety of healthy and nutritious foods for meals and snacks including fruit and vegetables, wholegrain cereal products, dairy products,

lean meats, and alternatives using the [Traffic Light System](#). ELCs and SACS will not provide foods from the red category in weekly menus.

- 2.2 ELC and SACS that provide regular meals for children, must display and develop weekly menus with reference to known allergies and other dietary requirements. The menu should include enough detail to inform parents about what food and beverages will be offered. If the menu changes (for example, due to the unavailability of certain ingredients), parents should be informed of the substitute menu item offered to their child.
- 2.3 ELC and SACS are encouraged to vary the meals and snacks on the menu to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas.

Dietary requirements and anaphylaxis

- 2.4 Where dietary requirements involve a health issue, ELC and SACS will develop risk minimisation plans (r90) for children in line with the [ELC and SAC Medical Conditions and Administration of Medication Policy](#).
- 2.5 ELC and SACS must ensure appropriate supervision and risk management for children during mealtimes and cooking experiences are evident.
- 2.6 Parents must inform the ELC or SACS of any dietary requirements or known allergies that their child/ren have.
- 2.7 ELC and SACS must respect and accommodate children's cultural or religious dietary practices as requested by families.
- 2.8 ELC and SACS will not provide food with nuts for children and will request all families not to bring food with nuts to the service; this includes ground or tree nuts.
- 2.9 Services will be guided by the [Anaphylaxis and Food Ban Fact Sheet](#).
- 2.10 ELC and SACS must display a notice stating how many children enrolled at the service are diagnosed as at risk of anaphylaxis. (r173(2)).
- 2.11 ELC and SACS educators and staff are aware of children who have severe allergic reactions to certain foods as per ASCIA Action Plans.
- 2.12 ELC and SACS do not assume that food is free of nuts or other allergens, even where families have been requested not to bring those foods to the service.
- 2.13 ELC and SACS are encouraged to promote other strategies including:
 - Reminding children not to share food they bring to the service
 - Monitoring food brought into the service for nuts and other foods known to cause anaphylaxis in children enrolled in the service
 - Ensure children will wash their hands before and after eating
 - Ensuring all children know which children have anaphylaxis and know to tell an educator quickly if their peers with food allergies look or say they are sick.

3. Safe Food Practices

- 3.1 ACECQA and the Food Safety Authority have slightly differing safe food practices, with the Food Safety Authority requiring additional record-keeping, registration, and training.
- 3.2 All ELCs and SACS must comply with ACECQA requirements. Food businesses must also comply with Food Safety Authority requirements.
- 3.3 Meeting the higher standards of the Food Safety Authority is considered to meet ACECQA requirements, without needing to duplicate them. For example, using record templates recommended by the Food Safety Authority instead of formats recommended by ACECQA.

Food businesses

- 3.4 Food businesses, including all CECG SACS, must:
 - Register as a food business:
 - [ACT Registration Site](#)
 - Appoint a Food Safety Supervisor (FSS) who has appropriate training:
 - [ACT FSS site](#)
 - Ensure all servers complete online training:
 - [ACT food training site](#) including [DoFoodSafely](#) or [I'M ALERT food safety training](#)
 - Record steps taken to ensure food safety for potentially hazardous food.
 - CECG recommends the [Food Safety Records Templates](#) (adapted from government templates) or equivalent records.
 - Comply with the [Food Safety Standards](#), including [2-hour/4-hour rule](#) for potentially hazardous food.
 - Take care to serve safe and hygienic food (e.g. ensuring proper hygiene, cooking, and temperature control).

Food Hygiene

- 3.5 ELC and SACS staff must:
 - Ensure that staff preparing food for children with food allergies or intolerances are proficient at reading ingredient labels. This includes understanding that certain allergens, for example wheat or gluten, are present in foods such as pasta or bread.
 - Ensure that hands are washed between handling different foods or changing tasks and long hair is tied back or covered with a hair net.
 - Separate knives and utensils for different foods to avoid cross-contamination.
 - Ensure staff that are unwell will not prepare or handle food.

Cleaning

ELC and SACS staff must:

- Ensure that food preparation areas and surfaces are cleaned both before and after any food preparation.
- Document the cleaning and complete the appropriate checklists.
- Ensure that all cooking and serving utensils are cleaned before use.
- Ensure the food storage area is clean, ventilated, dry, pest free, and not in direct sunlight.

- Ensure refrigerators and freezers are cleaned regularly and door seals checked and replaced if not in good repair.
- Prevent pest infestations by cleaning spills as quickly as possible and ensuring rubbish and food scraps are disposed of frequently.
- Ensure that floor mops are air dried after each use.

Storing Food**3.6 ELC and SACS staff must:**

- Ensure the refrigerator and freezer have a thermometer and that the refrigerator is maintained at 5°C or below and the freezer is maintained at -17°C or below.
- Ensure fridge and freezer temperatures are checked daily.
- Ensure that all foods stored in the refrigerator are stored in strong food-safe containers with either a fitting lid or tightly applied plastic wrap or foil.
- Ensure that all foods not stored in their original packaging are labelled with:
 - The name of the food,
 - The 'use by' date,
 - The date the food was opened,
 - Details of any allergens are present in the food.

3.7 Store dry foods in labelled and sealed, air-tight containers if not in original packaging.**Record Keeping – not food businesses**

- 3.8 ELCs that are not food businesses must still ensure they have records of appropriate food safety practices, to satisfy Quality Area 2 (Children's Health and Safety) and Quality Area 3 (Physical Environment).
- 3.9 CECG recommends the CECG [Food Handling checklist](#) or equivalent record templates.

4. Communicating with Families

- 4.1 ELC and SACS will promote nutritious choices and safe food handling, preparation and storage of food and where families provide their own food for children, including:
- Remind children not to share food they bring to the service.
 - Consider how food is stored between mealtimes and provide information to families about [lunchbox safety](#) and including cold bricks or similar cooling with food.
 - Encourage families to provide foods from the green category in the [Traffic Light System](#) and avoiding foods from the red category where possible.
 - Requesting all children to bring a personal water bottle.
 - Request that details of any food allergies or intolerances or specific dietary requirements be provided to the ELC or SAC service and work in partnership with families to develop an appropriate response so that children's individual dietary needs are met. Nominated Supervisors are to follow the [ELC and SACS Medical Conditions and Administration of Medication Policy](#)
- 4.2 ELC and SACS are not required to serve food provided by families, such as special occasions or birthdays, if it endangers children with allergies.

- 4.3 ELC and SACS are encouraged to engage parent/carers in decision making on healthy eating in a variety of ways including information sessions, informal discussions, newsletters, factsheets and during orientation.
- 4.4 ELC and SACS must ensure all children are offered food appropriate to their needs on a regular basis throughout the day.

5. Educational Programming and Positive Environment

- 5.1 ELC and SACS should consider how mealtimes and educational programming can be used to promote children's agency, reflect their independence and choice, and involve them in decision making about healthy food and beverage choices. For example:
- Discussing nutritional food choices during education and mealtimes.
 - Encourage children to participate in a variety of 'hands-on' food preparation experiences where the educators can role-model and discuss safe food handling with children.
 - Reflect how educator to child, and child to child, relationships can be supported during mealtimes.
 - Using food to explore science, math and literacy concepts.
- 5.2 ELC and SACS ensure that educators sit with children at meal and snack times to role-model healthy food and drink choices and actively engage children in conversations about the food and drink provided.
- 5.3 ELC and SACS to recognise, nurture and celebrate the dietary differences of children from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- 5.4 ELC and SACS should create a relaxed atmosphere at mealtimes where children have enough time to eat and enjoy their food as well as enjoying social interactions with educators and other children.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Approved Provider

- 6.1 The Approved Provider must:
- Ensure the nominated supervisor is aware of their responsibilities and obligations under the Education Care Services National Law and National Regulations in relation to this policy and relevant procedures to ensure awareness of safe food handling practices.
 - Ensure the service has safe drinking water readily available for children to drink throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
 - Ensure adequate health and hygiene practices are followed, as well as safe premises, equipment and practices for handling, preparing and storing food, in line with Australia food safety standards.
 - Ensure that child enrolment records include any special considerations for the child, such as cultural or religious dietary restrictions, as well as any health-related dietary restrictions.
 - Take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors follow the Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements policy and procedures.
 - Ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, educators, staff, volunteers and families, and available for inspection.

- Ensure services have a food safety supervisor to oversee food handlers and is renewed every 5 years where a service provides and serves meals on a regular basis.

Nominated Supervisor

6.2 The nominated supervisor must:

- Ensure that regulatory obligations are met in relation to nutrition, food and beverages, and dietary requirements. Using the ELC and SACS food handling fact sheet.
- Ensure new team members and educators are aware of food practices and procedures.
- Ensure fresh drinking water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day both indoor and outdoor environments.
- Ensure families complete any food preference, allergies, intolerances, cultural or religious considerations or medical considerations which involve food and food practices in their child's enrolment form.
- Consult with families to develop individual management plans, including completing risk minimisation and communications plans for children with medical conditions that can be impacted by food, as per [ELC and SACS Medical conditions and administer of medication policy](#)
- Ensure the food and beverages provided are nutritious and adequate in quantity, and chosen based on each child's dietary requirements (accounting for their growth and development needs, as well as any specific cultural, religious or health requirements)
- Ensure any changes to children's individual dietary requirements are recorded and communicated to all staff.
- Appoint a food safety supervisor to oversee food handlers if meals are prepared and served on a regular basis.
- Ensure the staff attend basic safe food handling training such as I'm Alert Food Safety Training or Do Food Safely.
- Ensure the menu is displayed in an accessible and prominent area for families to view.
- Ensure the menu is accurate and describes the food and beverages provided each day of the week, including any alterations that may need to take place due to stock availability.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for staff and educators to undertake regular professional development to maintain and enhance their knowledge about early childhood nutrition and food safety practices.
- Display nutritional information for families and keep them regularly updated.

Educators

6.3 The educators must:

- Implement the Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements policy and procedures
- Handle, prepare and store food using safe practices, in line with Australian food safety standards and any jurisdictional requirements.
- Ensure safeguards are in place to prevent children being provided with the wrong food.
- Ensure children always have access to safe drinking water and are offered food and beverages appropriate to each child's needs on a regular basis throughout the day.
- Be familiar with the individual needs and action plans for the children in your care with specific dietary requirements, and ensure those requirements are taken into consideration, including on excursions.

- Maintain ongoing communication with families and other members of staff (including the nominated supervisor) about any changes to children's dietary requirements and ensure these changes are reflected at mealtimes.
- Implement and reflect on program planning to promote healthy eating and knowledge of nutrition by children, e.g. eating with the children, conversations during mealtimes around food
- Involve children in decision-making about healthy food and beverage choices, e.g. having them assist with food preparation.
- Encourage parents to the best of our ability to continue our healthy eating message in their homes.

Parents/carers

6.4 Parents/carers must:

- Ensure the service is advised of their child's dietary requirements – relating to their child's growth and development needs, as well as any specific cultural, religious or health requirements – at the time of enrolment, and that this information is kept up to date.
- Inform the service if their child/ren have a medical condition that can be impacted by food, to work with the service to develop risk minimisation plans.
- If providing food and beverages from home, ensure these are nutritious and plentiful and that they are in line with service requirements (e.g. that they do not contain allergens that could harm other children at the service), noting that the service is not required to serve food and beverages from home.
- Provide an up-to-date Action plan to the service before the child starts.

7. Definitions

7.1 **Dietary requirements:** Food and beverages provided by a service must have regard to individual children's dietary requirements, meaning:

- each child's growth and development needs
- any specific cultural, religious or health requirements.

7.2 **Food safety:** Safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food to minimise risks to children.

7.3 **National Law (s):** Education and Care Services National Law Act.

7.4 **Regulation (r):** Education and Care Services National Regulations

7.5 **Risk Minimisation Plan:** CECG medical conditions policy includes a risk minimisation plan to be developed in consultation with families of children with a specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition.

8. Related Documents and Legislation

8.1 Related legislation or Standards

- [ACT Food Safety Training](#)
- [Food Act 2001 \(ACT\)](#)
- [Food Regulation 2002 \(ACT\)](#)

- [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#)
- [Healthy Choices Traffic Light System](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)

9. Contact

9.1 For support or further questions relating to this policy, contact the CECG Early Learning Team.