Glen Iris Child Care and Kindergarten

GI-023 – Nutrition, Food and Beverages Policy

Policy Number	GI-023
Quality Area	QA2 – Children's Health and Safety
National Law	s.167
National Regulations	Regs. 77 • 78 • 79 • 80 • 90 • 168
Related NQS	QA2.1.3
EYLF V2.0	Principles – Partnerships • Equity, Inclusion and High Expectations
Victorian Child Safe Standards:	Standards 2, 5 & 11
Version:	1.0
Approved By:	Centre Director
Approved Date:	July 2026
Review Date:	July 2027

OUR COMMITMENT

At **Glen Iris child care and kindergarten** we recognise that healthy eating is fundamental to children's growth, development, wellbeing and lifelong learning.

We are committed to providing nutritious, balanced meals and snacks that support children's health while creating positive mealtime experiences that encourage independence, social connection and enjoyment of food.
Our menu reflects current healthy eating guidelines, respects children's cultural backgrounds and individual dietary requirements, and is developed in partnership with families.

Mealtimes are viewed as valuable learning opportunities where children develop confidence, self-help skills and healthy relationships with food.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

This policy supports Glen Iris child care and kindergarten in meeting its obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations by ensuring children receive adequate nutrition, appropriate beverages and safe food handling practices that promote their health, safety and wellbeing.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all food and beverages provided by the service promote children's health and wellbeing while meeting individual dietary, medical, cultural and religious requirements.

The policy also outlines safe food handling practices and establishes consistent mealtime procedures that support children's learning, independence and inclusion.

WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO

This policy applies to:

- Approved Providers
- Centre Director
- Nominated Supervisor
- Responsible Persons
- Educational Leader
- Educators
- Cooks and kitchen staff
- Relief Educators
- Students
- Volunteers
- Families

DEFINITIONS

Balanced Diet
A variety of foods from the five food groups that provide children with the nutrients needed for healthy growth, development and wellbeing.

Dietary Requirement
A child's individual nutritional needs, including allergies, intolerances, medical conditions, cultural practices, religious beliefs or family preferences.

Food Safety
Procedures that ensure food is stored, prepared, cooked and served safely to minimise the risk of foodborne illness.

Nut Aware
A risk minimisation approach that reduces exposure to nuts within the service. While every precaution is taken, the service cannot guarantee that the environment is completely nut free.

WHY THIS POLICY MATTERS

Healthy eating during early childhood supports physical growth, brain development, emotional wellbeing and lifelong healthy habits.

Positive mealtime experiences encourage children to explore new foods, develop independence, build social skills and establish respectful relationships with food. By providing nutritious meals, accommodating individual dietary needs and maintaining high standards of food safety, Glen Iris child care and kindergarten promotes every child's health, inclusion and wellbeing.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Glen Iris child care and kindergarten is committed to:

- Providing nutritious meals and snacks that meet recognised healthy eating guidelines.
- Respecting each child's dietary, cultural, religious and medical requirements.
- Maintaining safe food preparation, storage and serving practices.
- Creating calm, positive and inclusive mealtime experiences.
- Encouraging children's independence and self-help skills during meals.
- Working in partnership with families regarding children's nutritional needs.
- Promoting healthy eating through everyday experiences and the educational program.
- Maintaining a **nut aware** environment to reduce the risk of allergic reactions.

OUR POLICY

Glen Iris child care and kindergarten is committed to providing nutritious food and beverages that support children's health, development and wellbeing.

Meals and snacks provided by the service will be planned to meet recognised healthy eating guidelines and will offer children a variety of nutritious foods from the five food groups. Fresh drinking water will be available and accessible to children at all times.

The service recognises and respects each child's individual dietary requirements, including allergies, medical conditions, cultural practices and religious beliefs. Appropriate procedures will be implemented to minimise risks associated with food allergies and ensure all children can safely participate in mealtimes.

Mealtimes will be relaxed, enjoyable and unhurried, providing opportunities for children to develop independence, social skills and positive relationships with food. Educators will model healthy eating behaviours and encourage children to make their own choices without pressure, reward or punishment.

Safe food handling, preparation, storage and serving practices will be maintained at all times to protect children's health and comply with relevant food safety requirements.

HOW WE PUT THIS POLICY INTO PRACTICE

Healthy Menu Planning

Glen Iris child care and kindergarten will:

- Provide nutritious meals and snacks that align with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and recognised healthy eating recommendations for young children.
- Plan menus that include a variety of foods from the five food groups.
- Offer meals that are balanced, nutritious and appropriate for children's ages and stages of development.
- Rotate menus regularly to provide variety and encourage children to experience different foods and flavours.
- Display current menus for families and welcome feedback and suggestions.

Food and Beverage Provision

The service will:

- Provide fresh drinking water that is freely available and accessible to children at all times.
- Offer milk or other suitable beverages where appropriate as part of planned meals.
- Ensure meals and snacks are served at suitable intervals throughout the day.
- Encourage children to recognise their own hunger and thirst cues.
- Never use food or drinks as a reward, punishment or form of behaviour management.

Individual Dietary Requirements

Educators and kitchen staff will:

- Work closely with families to understand each child's dietary requirements.
- Implement individual risk minimisation plans for children with diagnosed food allergies or anaphylaxis.
- Ensure medical management plans are readily accessible and followed.
- Respect cultural, religious and family food preferences wherever possible.
- Clearly identify children's dietary requirements during meal preparation and service.
- Review dietary information regularly with families to ensure records remain current.

Food Safety

Glen Iris child care and kindergarten is committed to maintaining high standards of food safety.

Educators and kitchen staff will:

- Follow safe food handling, preparation and storage procedures.
- Maintain appropriate food temperatures during preparation and serving.
- Practise effective hand hygiene before handling food.
- Clean and sanitise food preparation and eating areas.
- Monitor food expiry dates and storage requirements.
- Ensure all food is prepared and served in a hygienic manner.

Mealtime Practices

Educators will:

- Create relaxed, enjoyable and social mealtime experiences.
- Sit with children during meals to promote conversation and model healthy eating behaviours.
- Encourage children to serve themselves where developmentally appropriate.
- Support children's independence in pouring drinks, using utensils and cleaning up after meals.
- Respect children's appetite and never pressure children to eat or finish their meals.
- Encourage children to try new foods while respecting individual preferences.

Supporting Learning Through Food

Healthy eating is embedded within the educational program.

Children may participate in experiences such as:

- Cooking activities.
- Gardening experiences.
- Harvesting herbs and vegetables.
- Learning about where food comes from.
- Exploring foods from different cultures.
- Discussions about healthy choices.
- Sustainability experiences such as composting and reducing food waste.

These experiences promote children's understanding of nutrition, sustainability and community connections.

Family Partnerships

Educators will:

- Share information about children's eating patterns with families.
- Invite families to contribute cultural recipes, ideas and family traditions.
- Communicate concerns regarding eating habits respectfully and collaboratively.
- Provide information that supports healthy eating where appropriate.
- Work with families to support children experiencing feeding or sensory challenges.

Nut Aware Environment

Glen Iris child care and kindergarten maintains a nut aware environment.

The service will:

- Minimise the risk of exposure to nuts wherever reasonably practicable.
- Inform families of the service's nut aware approach.
- Follow individual medical management plans for children diagnosed with allergies.
- Educate children about safe food practices in age-appropriate ways.
- Review allergy management procedures regularly.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Approved Providers

Will:

- Ensure systems are in place to provide safe, nutritious food and beverages.
- Provide appropriate kitchen facilities and equipment.
- Support compliance with food safety legislation and healthy eating guidelines.

Centre Director

Will:

- Monitor food safety and nutrition practices.
- Ensure menus reflect current healthy eating recommendations.
- Support educators and kitchen staff in implementing this policy.
- Ensure dietary information and medical management plans remain current.
- Promote partnerships with families regarding children's nutritional needs.

Educational Leader

Will:

- Support educators to embed healthy eating into the educational program.
- Encourage reflective practice regarding mealtime experiences.
- Promote opportunities for children to learn about nutrition, wellbeing and sustainability.

Educators

Will:

- Model healthy eating behaviours.
- Support positive and inclusive mealtime experiences.
- Follow individual dietary and medical management plans.
- Maintain food safety and hygiene practices.
- Encourage children's independence during meals.
- Communicate regularly with families regarding children's eating patterns.

Cook and Kitchen Staff

Will:

- Prepare nutritious meals in accordance with recognised healthy eating guidelines.
- Maintain food safety and hygiene standards.
- Follow individual dietary requirements and allergy management procedures.
- Communicate with educators regarding menu changes or dietary concerns.
- Participate in ongoing food safety training where required.

Students, Volunteers and Relief Educators

Will:

- Follow all food safety and hygiene procedures.
- Work under the guidance of qualified educators.
- Support positive mealtime experiences.
- Immediately report any concerns relating to food safety or children's dietary needs.

Glen Iris child care and kindergarten in practice

At Glen Iris child care and kindergarten, mealtimes are viewed as meaningful learning experiences that promote health, wellbeing and a sense of belonging. Children and educators eat together whenever possible, creating opportunities for conversation, relationship building and the development of positive lifelong eating habits.

Our menu is thoughtfully planned to provide nutritious, balanced meals while celebrating the cultural diversity of our community. We regularly invite families to share traditional recipes and food experiences, helping children explore different cultures and develop respect for diversity.

Healthy eating is extended beyond mealtimes through gardening projects, cooking experiences, sustainability initiatives and discussions about where food comes from. Children actively participate in caring for our vegetable and herb gardens, harvesting produce and contributing to simple cooking experiences, fostering a strong connection between nutrition, sustainability and lifelong wellbeing.

CHILDREN'S VOICE IN ACTION

Children are encouraged to actively participate in decisions about food and mealtimes in ways that are appropriate to their age and development.

Educators listen to children's ideas about menu preferences, favourite healthy foods and cultural celebrations. Children are supported to serve themselves, recognise their own hunger and fullness cues, and make choices about what and how much they eat from the healthy foods provided.

By involving children in gardening, cooking and meal preparation experiences, we strengthen their sense of agency, responsibility and curiosity about healthy eating and sustainable practices.

EXCEEDING PRACTICE

Glen Iris child care and kindergarten recognises that promoting healthy eating extends well beyond providing nutritious meals.

Our approach integrates nutrition into everyday learning through meaningful cooking experiences, gardening projects, sustainability initiatives and strong partnerships with families. Educators intentionally use mealtimes to build children's independence, language, social skills and cultural understanding.

Regular consultation with children and families, ongoing review of menus and reflective practice ensure our nutrition program continues to evolve and reflect the needs, interests and diversity of our community. Through these practices, healthy eating becomes an embedded part of our service culture rather than simply a daily routine.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Glen Iris child care and kindergarten is committed to continually strengthening our nutrition, food and beverage practices.
This policy will be reviewed through:

- Feedback from children, families and educators.
- Menu evaluations and family surveys.
- Food safety audits.
- Observations of children's participation and mealtime experiences.
- Professional learning.
- Staff meetings and critical reflection.
- Quality Improvement Plan goals.
- Changes to legislation, recognised healthy eating guidelines and best practice.

Continuous improvement ensures our food and nutrition practices remain safe, inclusive, responsive and reflective of the needs of our children, families and community.

RELATED LEGISLATION

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

- **s.167** – Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards**.**

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

- **Reg. 77 –** Health, hygiene and safe food practices.
- **Reg. 78 –** Food and beverages.
- **Reg. 79 –** Service providing food and beverages.
- **Reg. 80 –** Weekly menu.
- **Reg. 90 –** Medical conditions policy.
- **Reg. 168 –** Education and care service policies and procedure

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Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety

- **QA2.1.3 –** Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.

Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) V2.0

Principles

- Partnerships
- Equity, Inclusion and High Expectations
- Respect for Diversity

Practices

- Responsiveness to Children
- Learning Environments
- Learning Through Play
- Holistic, Integrated and Interconnected Approaches

Outcomes

- **Outcome 1 –** Children have a strong sense of identity.
- **Outcome 2 –** Children are connected with and contribute to their world.
- **Outcome 3 –** Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.

Victorian Child Safe Standards

This policy supports:

- **Standard 2** – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
- **Standard 5** – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
- **Standard 11** – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Anaphylaxis Management Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Excursions Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Medical Conditions Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Sleep and Rest Policy
- Supervision Policy

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The following documents support the implementation of this policy:

- Weekly Menus
- Food Safety Program
- Temperature Monitoring Records
- Cleaning and Sanitising Schedules
- Individual Medical Management Plans

- Allergy and Anaphylaxis Risk Minimisation Plans
- Family Communication Records
- Menu Evaluations
- Professional Learning Records
- Critical Reflection Records
- Quality Improvement Plan

EVIDENCE OF PRACTICE

Glen Iris child care and kindergarten demonstrates this policy through:

- Nutritious menus that reflect recognised healthy eating guidelines.
- Fresh drinking water available to children throughout the day.
- Positive, relaxed and inclusive mealtime experiences.
- Individual dietary requirements safely implemented and reviewed.
- Safe food preparation, storage and serving practices.
- Children's participation in cooking, gardening and sustainability experiences.
- Family contributions to menus and cultural food experiences.
- Ongoing professional learning in nutrition, food safety and allergy management.
- Regular menu reviews and critical reflection informing continuous improvement.
- Quality Improvement Plan goals that promote children's health and wellbeing.

REFLECTION & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Critical reflection supports our commitment to providing nutritious food, safe food practices and meaningful mealtime experiences.

Reflective questions include:

- How effectively do our menus meet the nutritional needs of all children?
- Do our mealtime practices promote children's independence, wellbeing and enjoyment of food?
- How do we ensure every child's dietary, cultural, religious and medical requirements are respected?
- How are children actively involved in learning about healthy eating and sustainability?
- How do family feedback and children's preferences influence our menu planning?
- Are our food safety practices consistently implemented across the service?
- What opportunities exist to further strengthen our nutrition program?

Outcomes from these reflections inform policy reviews, menu planning, professional learning, educator practice and our Quality Improvement Plan.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date Approved	Approved By	Summary of Changes
1.0	July 2026	Centre Director	Initial policy developed as part of the Glen Iris child care and kindergarten Governance, Policy and Procedures Manual. Developed to align with the Education and Care Services National Law, National Regulations, National Quality Standard, EYLF V2.0 and Victorian Child Safe Standards.