

Nutrition Policy

Name of the Child Care Program: _____

[Research shows all children need a variety of nutrient-rich foods](#) that include protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals, with the appropriate number of calories necessary to prevent hunger, foster healthy growth, and prevent obesity.

Staff Role

Staff will:

- Inform parents about the foods and beverages being served (using menus, bulletin boards, etc.).
- Model healthy eating habits by sitting with children during meals and snacks and eating the same foods served to children, unless there is a medical and/or health condition that requires otherwise.
- Observe and support children's eating habits including honoring hunger and fullness cues, communicating with parents if any concerning habits are observed.
- Supervise and encourage children to safely serve themselves meals, beverages, and snacks "family-style," being on alert for any choking hazards.
- Gently encourage children who are not eating, or who are eating very little food, to eat and drink.
- Provide children adequate time and space to eat meals and snacks, to hydrate and to have conversation with the adults and their peers.
- Be informed of all food allergies and take the necessary precautions to provide a safe diet to all children.
- Ensure children wash their hands before eating and model by also washing their hands.

Staff will not:

- Force or bribe children to eat or drink.
- Use food and/or beverages as a reward or punishment.



Nutrition Education

We provide formal nutrition education to children at least twice per year that includes fun, hands-on activities based on the children’s developmental stage. Informal “teachable moments” occur throughout the year. This may include the use of story books, gardening, taste testing and other activities that can integrate literacy and other learning with nutrition concepts.

The nutrition education we provide through lessons and/or during meal/snack times gives children the knowledge and skills needed to make smart food choices.

We teach children to recognize correct portion sizes.

We implement nutrition education that reflects the children’s culture; and gives them opportunities to try new foods and to experience food related activities (e.g., preparing food, cooking and gardening).

Our staff receives nutrition training and nutrition education training each year.

We provide nutrition education information to our parents through parent communications (e.g., newsletters, emails, bulletin boards, social media) and/or during special events (e.g., family night events, parent meetings).



Nutrition Guidelines for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

Breastfeeding Support:

We encourage and support breastfeeding and feeding of breast milk by making arrangements for mothers to feed their children comfortably on-site and [by safely storing and serving breast milk to breastfeeding infants](#). We include practices such as “paced bottle feeding” with breastfed children.

Infant Feeding Practices:

1. We serve breast milk or infant formula until at least age 12 months, not cow’s milk unless a written exception is provided by a primary care provider and parent/guardian. We do not feed an infant formula mixed with cereal, fruit juice or other foods.
2. We feed infants when they show signs of hunger and stop feeding infants when they show signs of fullness.
3. We hold infants while bottle feeding and position infants for bottle feeding in the caregiver/teacher’s arms or sitting up on the caregiver/teacher’s lap.
4. We develop a plan for introducing age-appropriate solid foods in consultation with the child’s parent/guardian and primary care provider:
 - a. Introducing age-appropriate solid foods no sooner than 4 months of age, and preferably around 6 months of age, when the infant is developmentally ready.
 - b. Introducing breastfed infants gradually to iron-fortified foods no sooner than 4 months of age, but preferably around 6 months, when the infant is developmentally ready.
5. We serve whole vegetables and fruits, mashed or pureed, for infants 6 months (when the infant is developmentally ready) up to 1 year of age and we do not serve fruit juice to children younger than 12 months of age.
6. We follow the [American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations](#) for the introduction of solid foods, snacking, healthy beverages, and actions to foster self-feeding.

Our toddler and preschooler meal and snack offerings include:

1. Whole or minimally processed, nutrient-rich foods.
2. Age-appropriate portion sizes.
3. Foods that are low in fat, added sugars, and sodium.
4. A variety of fruits, vegetables, proteins, and whole grains.
5. Whole fruits and vegetables in place of 100% fruit or vegetable juice (if juice is served at all).

Our beverage offerings adhere to [California’s Healthy Beverages in Child Care Act](#).

We provide access to self-service water throughout the day and our staff actively offers water to children throughout the day, including during and after physical activity and between meals and snacks. Self-service water is available to children during meals. Water is served at the table at snack time when no other beverage is being served as part of the snack.

Check one (if applicable):

- Our program follows the [Child and Adult Care Food Program's meal pattern](#) to ensure children receive healthy meals or snacks; OR
- Our program participates in the [Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) to ensure children receive healthy meals or snacks.

Note: Parents are only allowed to bring in one food component for their child who does not have a disability in order for the site to be able to claim Child and Adult Care Food Program reimbursement. If it is due to a disability, parents can bring in all food components except for one, which the site must provide in order for the center/home to claim the meal for reimbursement.

Special Dietary Concerns

We will make reasonable food and beverage substitutions for participants with a disability that restricts their diet. We require that parents provide physician's documentation of any special needs related to a child's disability that affects their diet, in order to ensure the safety of the child.

Documentation must describe how the disability restricts the child's diet, explain what must be done to accommodate the disability, identify foods to omit from the child's diet, recommend foods to substitute and be signed by a licensed physician, physicians' assistant or nurse practitioner.

We encourage parents to share with us how their culture and/or religion may affect their child's food choices. We may ask that parents provide supplemental food to accommodate these choices.

For special dietary needs that are not considered a disability, such as a vegan or vegetarian diet, our program requires parents to provide written instructions on food choices, including both foods that can be eaten and those to avoid or eliminate from the child's diet. We will attempt to meet the child's needs to the extent possible but encourage parents to provide supplemental food to accommodate these choices.



Foods Brought from Home

Except for special dietary needs (e.g., religious purposes, vegetarianism, disability accommodation) we prohibit, or limit, foods brought from home. This helps to manage food safety, jealousy issues, and allergy concerns. As needed, we provide parents with guidance regarding foods and beverages they can bring from home, prioritizing healthy, low-fat, low sodium, low sugar options and prohibiting candy, gum, dessert foods and sugar-sweetened beverages.

Parents must package foods and beverages brought from home in spill-proof containers that are clearly labeled with the child's name, date, and type of food.

Children shall not share foods and beverages brought from home with other children.

Celebrations

Celebrations/holidays will focus on non-food activities and will include fun-filled activities, such as scavenger hunts, arts and craft projects, and/or field trips.

Celebrations that have food will include fruits, vegetables, and other healthy snacks and beverages. All food and beverages will adhere to the requirements described in this policy.

Staff will provide parents with a list of approved healthy foods and beverages and non-food alternatives (e.g., party hats or placemats, bubbles, bookmarks, stickers, etc.).

We celebrate birthdays during one monthly event. On these days, we honor children with special privileges, such as serving as the teacher's helper for the day.



Food Storage

We put away frozen and cold foods promptly after purchasing.

We store foods in covered containers. We label and date these foods.

We place thermometers in a visible location in refrigerators and freezers. We check the temperature daily and record these temperatures on a monthly temperature log.

- Keep refrigerator temperature between 32 degrees and 40 degrees F.
- Keep freezer temperature at 0 degrees or less.

We clean the refrigerator, freezer, and dry storage areas frequently.

We store foods in a locked cupboard that is separate from cleaning supplies.

Meal Preparation

Staff wash their hands with soap and hot water before beginning food preparation, moving from one food preparation area to another, and putting on or changing gloves used for any purpose.

Staff use specially designated cutting boards and separate utensils for raw meats. These cutting boards are not the same as those used for fruits, vegetables, and other foods.

We cook meats thoroughly. We use a food thermometer to ensure meats are cooked to the following internal temperatures:

- Poultry, casserole, leftovers—165 degrees F.
- Ground pork, beef, egg dishes—160 degrees F.



Field Trips

Meals served during field trips meet the requirements of the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).

We safely transport field trip foods.

- Hot items are kept hot, at or above 135 degrees F.
 - We use an insulated container to keep hot food hot for shorter periods.
- Cold items are kept cold at or below 41 degrees F.
 - We place food in insulated containers on ice.

We pack food in clean containers that we wash and sanitize after every use.

We use proper hand washing and sanitation methods for both children and staff.

We throw away all perishable foods that have been left out for more than 1 hour when the temperature is above 90 degrees F (e.g., when on a field trip).

We properly clean and sanitize containers and tools, etc. to reduce risk for foodborne illness.

Parent Printed Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Staff Printed Name: _____

Staff Signature: _____

Date: _____

Extracted from and for use with the EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & NUTRITION TEMPLATES AND POLICIES document.