



# MSS & WAABINY OSHC

## HEALTHY EATING AND SAFE FOOD HANDLING POLICY



### PURPOSE

Meal and snack times provide positive learning experiences for children who will be encouraged to develop healthy eating habits. Parents/Guardians will be consulted and asked to share family and multicultural values and experiences to enrich the variety and enjoyment of food planned to meet each child's daily nutritional needs.

Montessori Stepping Stones (MSS) will strictly follow recommended safe food storage and preparation guidelines within the Safe Food Australia, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition and the guidelines as set out in our food safety plan to ensure children's protection from food borne illness.

### SCOPE

All people involved in healthy eating and safe food handling at MS – as well as children, families, educators and employees who assist in the continuous improvement and implementation of relating quality practices.

### DESCRIPTION/GENERAL

MSS understands it has a duty of care to ensure that children's nutritional needs are met and food is prepared and stored safely within its service. Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play and leisure.

All children have the right to develop to their full potential in an environment, which provides for their health and wellbeing. Appropriate strategies will be implemented for children with special dietary needs and cultural food requirements.

Children are especially prone to food borne illness because their immune systems are still developing and they cannot fight infection as well as adults can. The main causes of food borne illness are inadequate cooking, improper holding temperatures, contaminated equipment, unsafe food sources and poor personal hygiene.

MSS maintains the highest level of food preparation, handling and storage standards by implementing a stringent food safety plan, which is regularly audited internally, as well as by accredited 3<sup>rd</sup> party external auditors.

### LEGISLATION AND GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS

Laws relating to protection of privacy and confidentiality; duty of confidentiality arising from contract with parent; to whom and when information must be disclosed;

- Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations 1993
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991
- Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012
- Education and Care Services National (WA) Regulations 2012

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### DEFINITIONS/PRINCIPLES/STRATEGIES FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Education and Care Services National (WA) Law Act 2012 requires that the service takes reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm, injury and infection. MSS will obtain professional guidance through initiatives such as Eat Smart Play Smart, the Australian Healthy Eating Guide, the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia, the Australian Government Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings, and professional bodies such as Nutrition Australia and Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

### CHILDREN'S NEEDS

Children need a balanced diet and their food preferences to be respected while food allergies are responded to and special diets followed. Their food should be appetising with opportunities to try new foods during regular mealtimes yet satisfaction of hunger between meals. Children are allowed to eat at their own pace.

### FAMILIES' NEEDS

Their religious and cultural beliefs and practices as well as lifestyle choices in relation to food are respected and provide input into and feedback about what and when their child eats.

### EDUCATOR AND EMPLOYEES NEEDS

Appropriate resources and facilities to provide for each child's daily nutritional needs with training for food handlers.

### MANAGEMENT NEEDS

Be informed of any issues in relation to food provision that may impact on the management of the services.

### TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A person employed to prepare meals will be qualified in an approved training course on food handling, hygiene and nutrition.

Educators and food preparation employees will be provided with on-going professional development opportunities to refresh their knowledge of children's dietary needs, and food handling and hygiene practices. All employees are required to complete the "I'm Alert" food safety training course annually.

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### PROVISION OF HEALTHY MENU, SNACKS AND MEALS

Food will be prepared, stored and served hygienically. All employees will follow the procedures as detailed in the food safety plan for the safe storage and heating of food and drink.

Food preparation facilities will be maintained in a hygienic condition in accordance with Health, Hygiene and Infection Control policy and health regulations.

MSS will ensure it meets all requirements for food handling premises set down in the relevant WA state food hygiene and safety legislation.

MSSS will provide children with balanced snacks and meals consistent with the Australian Government Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings, and/or the Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia, that meet the recommended daily nutritional needs of children within each age grouping, are adequate in quantity, and take into account the child's growth and development needs.

Snack and meal times will be treated as social occasions. Educators will sit with the children and interact with them to encourage healthy eating habits and an appreciation of a variety of foods. Children will be assisted where required but will be encouraged to be independent and to help themselves wherever appropriate.

School age children will be encouraged and supervised to assist in preparation, serving and cleaning up at snack time.

The menu will be nutritious and varied and will describe the food and beverages to be provided by MSS each day. Wherever possible fresh seasonally available produce, which is free of preserves and additives, will be used. Menus will be planned with input from children, families, food preparation employees, educators, and other employees, and displayed in the food preparation area in a prominent position visible to families. Families will be notified of any changes to the planned menu.

Snacks/meals will be appetising and provide variety in colour, texture and taste. Water will always be readily available and will be regularly offered to children.

Snack and meal times will be set to a regular schedule but individual needs will be accommodated and children who are still hungry will be offered small nutritionally appropriate snacks.

Children will not be required to eat food they do not like, or eat more than they want. The provision or denial of food will never be used as a form of punishment.

The importance of good healthy food, and hygienic and safe food handling and storage practices will be discussed with children as part of their daily program.

All children and educators/employees will follow the set hand washing schedule and procedures prior to preparing, serving or eating food.

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### FEEDING BABIES

Babies are always fed individually by educators.

MSS will discuss choices regarding breast and bottle feeding with families, will support families who choose to breastfeed their child while they are at the service by providing a comfortable and private place for breastfeeding, and will also facilitate the safe storage and heating of breast milk for families who wish to leave expressed feeds at the service for their baby.

Educators will document bottle feed amounts to monitor fluid input/output; especially when the weather is warm and young children are at risk of dehydration. Educators will record the information in a daily diary for each child and verbalise the information to parents on arrival.

Baby bottles should be heated by using specifically designed bottle warmers, and **always heat-tested** to ensure the milk is warm but not hot before feeding an infant. Microwaves are not to be used for heating baby bottles.

Introducing food and/or solids to babies and toddlers will be done in consultation with families, and in line with recognised nutritional guidelines.

Careful consideration will be given to reducing the risk of choking when choosing foods for young children

### CONSULTING AND COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

Families will be consulted about their child's individual needs and likes and dislikes in relation to food and any culturally appropriate food needs.

Families will be encouraged to share aspects of their family life and culture in relation to mealtimes.

Children will be encouraged to try new food but will never be forced to eat. Their food likes and dislikes and the family's religious and cultural beliefs or family lifestyle i.e. vegetarianism will always be respected. MSS will discuss with families which mealtime practices that can be accommodated within the service and those which cannot due to health or hygiene concerns.

The menu will reflect a wide variety of cultures, and especially the cultural backgrounds of families and the local community. Recipes for all meals will be available to families on request.

Where children are on special diets the parents/guardians will be asked to provide a list of suitable foods and their child's food preferences. Any food allergies and dietary requirements will be provided by the parent/guardian in the enrolment form, detailing which foods the child must avoid.

Parents/guardians will be advised of their child's food intake each day via communications on the Xplor platform.

Information on nutrition, age appropriate diet, food handling and storage will be displayed at the service and provided to parents/guardians.

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Food provided by families that include meat, chicken and/or dairy foods are to be refrigerated until ready for consumption.

### DENTAL HEALTH

MSS will liaise with families to help with dental health practices that are workable at home and at the service.

MSS incorporates information on dental health practices into the children's program, including tooth brushing, 'tooth friendly' snacks, and going to the dentist.

MSS encourages the drinking of water to quench thirst. Children will be encouraged to rinse their mouths with water to remove food debris after every meal or snack.

Tooth brushing is the most effective means of removing bacterial plaque from the teeth and gums. Information on effective tooth brushing techniques will be provided to families.

Individual toothbrushes (if used) will be rinsed after each use and stored in clean individual, enclosed containers.

Where requested, MSS will assist in gaining information for families on dental health principles relating to different age groups of children, as recommended by recognised health and dental health authorities. Wherever possible MSS will aim to retrieve and provide this information in families home languages

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