

OP45 Nutrition, Food and Beverages Policy

Policy Title:	Nutrition, Food and Beverages Policy (Incorporates previous OP28 Food Preparation, Storage and Handling Policy)
Policy Number:	OP45
Version Number:	4.0
Last Updated	September 2022

1 Purpose

In accordance with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, Petit ELJ services have a nutritional food and beverages policy and procedure in place to ensure quality practices relating to nutrition, food and beverage handling and dietary requirements are followed at all times.

Petit ELJ recognises the importance of safe food handling and healthy eating to promote the growth and development of young children and is committed to supporting the healthy food and drink choices of children in our care. Petit ELJ also recognises the importance of supporting families to provide healthy food and drink to their children.

Petit ELJ is committed to implementing the healthy eating key messages outlined in the Australian Dietary Guidelines and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and utilise feedAustralia resources to ensure daily nutritional requirements are being met.

2 Scope

The Approved Provider, Operations Managers, Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director, educators, employees, and children within the services.

3 Definitions

Dietary requirements - Food and beverages provided by a service must have regard to individual children's dietary requirements, meaning: (1) each child's growth and development needs; and (2) any specific cultural, religious or health requirements.

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

4 Policy principles

Petit ELJ is committed to:

- Following legislation guidelines to ensure the provision of healthy foods and drinks meet the requirements for children according to the Australian Dietary Guidelines. It is essential that Petit ELJ partners with families to provide education about nutrition and promote healthy eating habits for young children to positively influence their health 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.

- Promoting and supporting healthy food and drink choices for children in our care. This policy affirms our position on the provision of healthy food and drinks while children are in our care and the promotion and education of healthy choices for optimum nutrition.
- Providing a positive eating environment that reflects dietary requirements, cultural and family values, and promotes lifelong learning for children.
- Ensuring consistently high standards of food preparation and food storage and transportation are adhered to.

5 Policy implementation

All food prepared by Petit ELJ service's endeavour to be consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and provide children with 50% of the recommended daily dietary intake for all nutrients. Food will be served at various times throughout the day to cater for all children's nutritional needs.

Mealtimes will reflect a relaxed and pleasant environment where educators engage in meaningful conversations with children and each child's appetite is respected. This assists in creating a positive and enjoyable eating environment. Food is never used as a reward or withheld from children for disciplinary purposes.

Developmentally appropriate eating utensils and furniture are provided for each child. All children are encouraged to be independent and develop social skills at mealtimes. Older toddlers and pre-schoolers are encouraged to serve their own food and drink and to assist in clearing dishes, providing opportunities to develop independence and self-esteem while promoting children's agency and decision-making.

Safe drinking water is accessible to children at all times and educators encourage children to drink water at frequent intervals.

Food will be prepared in accordance with the Petit ELJ Food Safety Program. All kitchens and food preparation areas will comply with Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) and any relevant local jurisdictional requirements (i.e., local council registrations and inspections).

All employees involved in the stages of food handling have the skills and knowledge to ensure food safety is a priority. All educators and chefs complete the 'NAQ Nutrition – Level 1 Safe Food Handling for the Early Years Sector' training during their Induction and annually thereafter.

Where food is provided by the service, Petit ELJ 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 alternative foods high in protein.
- Inform families on enrolment, orientation and by way of display on centre entry, of any foods and / or ingredients that are restricted from the service for the health and safety of all children (for example eggs or nuts).
- Plan and display the service menu which is based on the approved Petit ELJ FeedAustralia menu planning principles and which meets 50% of the daily nutritional needs of children.
- The weekly menu accurately describes the food and beverages for each day and is displayed prominently for families. The Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director will advise families of any changes to the menu on a timely basis as well as highlighting changes on the displayed menu
- Plan healthy snacks on the menu to complement what is served at mealtimes and ensure the snacks are substantial enough to meet the energy and nutrient needs of children.
- Vary the meals and snacks on the menu to keep children interested and to introduce children to a range of healthy food ideas. However, children are not required to taste new foods or to eat food they do not like.
- Regularly review the menu to ensure it meets best practice guidelines and seek input from children, educators, and stakeholders.

- Consult with health professionals to support the menu development including Dietitians for children with special dietary requirements such as vegetarian and vegans, dentists, and speech therapists.
- Respect and accommodate children's cultural or religious dietary practices as requested by families.

Where food is brought from home Petit ELJ will:

- Provide information to families on the types of foods and drinks recommended for children, that are suitable for children's lunchboxes and that are accepted by the service.
- Ensure that families are aware of any food restrictions imposed by the service to ensure health and safety of the children and that food containing restricted ingredients eg. eggs or nuts will not be provided by or accepted by the service.
- Provide information to families on how to read the Nutritional Information Panel on food and drink labels.
- Encourage children to eat the more nutritious foods provided in their lunchbox, such as sandwiches, fruit, cheese, and yoghurt, before eating any less nutritious food provided.
- Strongly discourage the provision of highly processed snack foods high in fat, salt, and/or sugar, and low in essential nutrients in children's lunchboxes. Examples of these foods include sweet biscuits, some muesli bars, breakfast bars and fruit filled bars, and chips.
- Food items that are not to be brought to the service include confectionary (lollies, sweets, chocolate, jelly), deep fried foods (chicken nuggets, fish fingers) and sugary drinks (cordial, energy drinks).

Petit ELJ has an obligation to ensure the health and safety of staff and children in the service, so far as reasonably practicable. Our services have implemented the following measures for:

Mealtimes

- Ensure children and staff wash and dry their hands (using soap, running water, and single use disposable towels or individual hand towels) before handling food or eating meals and snacks.
- Ensure gloves (and food tongs) are used by all staff handling 'ready to eat' foods.
- Ensure food is stored and served at safe temperatures (below 5°C or above 60°C), with consideration to the safe eating temperature requirements of children.
- Discourage children from handling other children's food and utensils.
- Ensure educators and chefs attend relevant training courses and pass relevant information on to the rest of the staff.
- The service maintains a list and photographs of children with special food requirements for health or medical reasons (e.g., allergies, intolerances). This information is displayed in the food preparation areas and strategically throughout the service. Relief staff are informed of these dietary requirements when they begin their shift.
- Meals served to children with dietary requirements/restrictions and allergies/intolerances are served on distinctive plates.
- Mealtimes are relaxed, pleasant, and unhurried. Educators sit and eat with the children, maintaining good personal nutrition, and talk with them on topics of interest, including, but not limited to, healthy food and nutrition.
- Parents/guardians are informed of their child's food and beverage intake in the child's Communication Book (infants and toddlers) and Daily Feedback Sheet (older children). Educators discuss with parents any concerns about a child who has not eaten well.
- Children that require a bottle at any time throughout the day will be given this to drink either sitting up at the table or in an educator's arms. A child will never consume any food or drink on their bed and will not be offered a bottle or drink while lying down.
- First foods will never be given at the service and a comprehensive list of all foods that the child has had at home (during weaning) will be made to ensure no first foods are offered. The parents will be given a copy of the menu on orientation to review and identify any food that has not been given at home.

Cooking with children

Cooking can help develop children's knowledge and skills regarding healthy eating habits. Cooking is a great activity and provides opportunities for children to be exposed to new foods, sharing of recipes and cooking skills.

On these occasions participating educators and chefs will be vigilant to ensure that the experience remains safe, and relevant food hygiene practices are adhered to.

Expressed Breast Milk and Formula

- Ensure a suitable place is provided within each service where mothers can breastfeed their babies or express breast milk.
- Ensure the safe handling of breast milk and infant formula including receipt, transporting, storage, thawing, warming, preparing and bottle feeding in accordance with the [Expressed Breast Milk and Premade Formula Procedure](#).
- Ensure children are not allowed to walk around with bottles or to lie down to consume their bottles. They must be held in a semi-upright position or sat up at a table.

Food Hygiene

Food poisoning is caused by bacteria, viruses, or other toxins being present in food and can cause extremely unpleasant symptoms such as diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps, and fevers. Children under five years of age are considered a high-risk group as their immune systems are still developing and they produce less of the stomach acid required to kill harmful bacteria than older children or adults (Foodsafety.gov. 2019).

Petit ELJ is committed ensure each service will strictly adhere to food hygiene standards to prevent the risk of food poisoning.

Buying and transporting food

- Ensure labels are always checked for the 'use by' and 'best before' dates, understanding that 'use by' dates apply to perishable foods that could potentially cause food poisoning if out of date, whilst 'best before' dates refer to food items with long shelf life but quality could be compromised.
- Ensure food items to not have damaged, swollen, or leaking packaging.
- Ensure fresh meat, chicken, or fish products cannot leak on to other food items.
- Ensure chilled, frozen, and hot food items are kept out of the 'danger zone' (5 °c to 60 °c) on the trip back to the service by:
 - Not getting chilled frozen, or hot food items until the end of the shopping.
 - Placing these items in an insulated shopping bag or cooler.
 - Immediately unpacking and storing these items upon the return to the service.

Online shopping

- Ensure food items are delivered in packaging that keeps food out of 'danger zones' as described above and within delivery window as provided by the company.
- Ensure products selected are high quality.
- Ensure products are unpacked promptly upon receiving goods.

Storing food

- Ensure the refrigerator and freezer has 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 and recorded on the [Temperature Control Log](#).
- Ensure raw foods are stored below cooked foods in the refrigerator to avoid cross contamination by foods dripping onto other foods.
- Ensure fresh meat is not stored in the fridge for more than 3 days.

- Ensure that all foods stored in the refrigerator are stored in strong food-safe containers with either a tight-fitting lid, or tightly applied plastic wrap or foil.
- Ensure an inventory of freezer contents is maintained and details kept in a separate notebook provided for this purpose.
- 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 present in the food.
 - Transfer the contents of opened cans into appropriate containers.
 - Ensure all bottles and jars are refrigerated after opening.
- When cooking food you intend to cool and use later, you need to cool the food to 5°C or colder as quickly as possible. Faster cooling times limit the time when these bacteria are able to grow or form toxins. When cooling cooked potentially hazardous food, cool the food within the following timeframes:
 - from 60°C to 21°C within two hours
 - from 21°C to 5°C within a further four hours
- Ensure disposable containers (e.g., Chinese food containers) are not reused.
- Ensure dry foods are stored in labelled and sealed air-tight containers if not in original packaging.
- Ensure that food allergies and intolerances are catered for by using separate easily identifiable storage containers in a separate area of the cupboard or pantry.
- Ensure where wraps are used for storage of food e.g, foil and freezer bags, food is completely covered.
- Ensure dry foods are stored in cupboards or pantry on shelving no lower than 30cm from the floor.
- Ensure bulk dry foods are stored only in food-safe and airtight containers.
- Use the FIFO (first in, first out) rule for all foods (dry, chilled, and frozen) to ensure rotation of stock so that older stock is used first.
- Ensure cleaning supplies and chemicals are stored separately to food items.
- Ensure breastmilk or infant formula is stored within the main section of the fridge and clearly labelled with the child's name and date of preparation.

Preparing and serving food

- Ensure all cooked food is cooked through and reaches 75°C
- Ensure that cooked food is served promptly or use a thermometer to ensure that hot food is maintained at above 60°C until ready to serve.
- Ensure that prepared cold food is stored in the refrigerator maintained at below 5°C until ready to serve.
- Ensure any cooked food that has been left in the 'danger zone' for two or more hours is discarded. Do not reheat.
- Reheat cooked food (if required, for example for a child who was sleeping at lunch time) to a temperature of 70°C (but only ever reheat **once**. Discard if the food is not eaten after being reheated).
- Ensure cooked and ready-to-eat foods are kept separate from raw foods.
- Ensure foods are defrosted in the fridge or microwave.
- Ensure fruit and vegetables are washed thoroughly under clean running water before preparation.
- Ensure unused washed fruit or vegetables are thoroughly dry before returning to storage.

- Ensure food that has been dropped on the floor is immediately discarded.
- Ensure kitchen utensils and equipment are thoroughly cleaned between using with different foods and/or between different tasks.
- Avoid cross-contamination by ensuring that separate knives and utensils are used for different foods.
- Avoid cross-contamination by ensuring that colour-coded cutting boards are used (note that it doesn't matter which colour you use for which food providing signs are displayed to alert all staff). Common colours are as follows:
 - Blue: raw fish/seafood
 - Green: fruit and vegetables
 - Red: raw meat
 - Brown: cooked meat
 - Yellow: raw poultry
 - White: bakery and dairy

The above are reflective of the Petit ELJ Chopping Board Colour Chart. Ensure that staff preparing food for children with food allergies or intolerances are proficient at reading ingredient labels.

- Ensure food is always served using tongs.
- Ensure that unwell staff do not handle food.

Cleaning

- Ensure that food preparation areas and surfaces are cleaned both before, after, and during any food preparation.
- Ensure that all cooking and serving utensils are cleaned and sanitised before use.
- Ensure refrigerators and freezers are cleaned regularly and door seals checked and replaced if not in good repair.
- Ensure food areas including cupboards and pantries are cleaned thoroughly and regularly.
- Ensure pest infestations are prevented by cleaning spills as quickly as possible and ensuring rubbish and food scraps are disposed of frequently.
- Ensure that floor mops are thoroughly cleaned and air dried in the sun after each use.
- Ensure any cleaning equipment that shows signs of wear or permanent soiling is replaced.
- Ensure clean clothing is worn by chefs (such as an apron or appropriate jacket).
- Ensure long hair is tied back or covered with a net (hairspray may be used for fringes to secure hair).
- Ensure hand and wrist jewellery are not worn while preparing food (e.g. Rings and bracelets)
- Ensure nails are kept short and clean and no nail polish is worn (as it can chip into food and hide dirt under the nails)
- Strict hand-washing hygiene is adhered to, including washing hands each time the chef (or other employee) returns to the kitchen before continuing with food preparation duties.
- Ensure wounds or cuts are covered with a brightly coloured, waterproof dressing (that will easily be seen if it falls off), and gloves will be worn over any dressings.

6 Responsibilities

Approved Provider:

It is the responsibility of the Approved Provider to:

- Ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met and staff are aware of their responsibilities and obligations in relation to this policy and relevant procedures to ensure awareness of safe food handling practices while promoting healthy eating.
- Ensure all Petit ELJ employees are provided with relevant and up to date training to understand a duty of care exists to ensure children are provided with a high level of health and safety when providing children with food and drinks.
- Ensure the Petit ELJ Enrolment Form include information relating to the child's food preferences, allergies, intolerances, cultural or religious considerations or medical conditions which involve food or food practices.
- Ensure the service menu is based on approved Petit ELJ menus, feedAustralia menu planning principles and is reviewed on a regular basis.
- Make sure any notification in relation to serious incidents is within the regulated timeframes as per the *Managing Reporting Requirements and Notifications Policy*.

Operations Managers:

It is the responsibility of the Operations Manager to:

- Keep the Approved Provider abreast of any legislative requirements that are not being met or that have changed.
- Monitor compliance at a service level and ensure staff and volunteers have completed the training on the policy and procedure.
- Complete all training requirements – reading this policy and associated documents within their 3-month induction period and annually thereafter.

Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director

It is the responsibility of the Nominated Supervisor / Centre Director to:

- Ensure the healthy eating message is promoted and positively reinforced amongst families through notice boards, newsletters, StoryPark, information nights, educator-parent meetings, website and up-to-date materials from recognised authorities.
- Ensure new staff are aware of food practices and procedures as outlined in this policy during Induction.
- Ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Ensure food and beverages are offered to children regularly during the day.
- Ensure Enrolment Form information relating to child's food preferences, allergies, intolerances, cultural or religious considerations or medical conditions is implemented and communicated to staff and service chef and ensure any changes to children's individual dietary requirements are recorded and communicated to all staff and chef.
- Ensure families are consulted to ensure individual management plans are developed and implemented, including completing Medical Condition or Health Risk Management Plan for children with medical conditions involving food as per Petit ELJ's *Medical Conditions Policy*.
- Ensure all staff complete Petit ELJ's mandatory safe food handling training on Induction and annually thereafter. Also ensure that the service chef holds a current Food Safety Supervisor Certificate.
- Ensure the service menu is reviewed on a regular basis and input is sought from staff, children, and stakeholders.

- Ensure employees and students are familiar with and follow all policies and procedures as developed by Petit ELJ. This includes ensuring compliance with all related policies and procedures.
- Complete all training requirements – reading this policy and associated documents within their 3-month induction period and annually thereafter.

Educators:

It is the responsibility of Educators to:

- Ensure water is readily available for children to drink throughout the day in both the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Be aware of children with food allergies, food intolerances, and special dietary requirements and consult with families and management to ensure individual management plans are developed and implemented, including completing Medical Condition or Health Risk Management Plan for children with medical conditions involving food as per Petit ELJ's *Medical Conditions Policy*.
- Ensure young children do not have access to foods that may cause choking and ensure all children are seated while eating and drinking. Educators must supervise children at this time.
- Participate in regular professional development to maintain and enhance knowledge about early childhood nutrition and food safety practices and participate in Petit ELJ Safe Food Handling training on a regular basis, at least every 12 months.
- Ensure infants are fed individually by educators and that age and developmentally appropriate utensils and furniture are provided for each child.
- Ensure that food is never used as a form of punishment or to be used as a reward or bribe.
- Ensure that children make their own decisions about what foods they want to eat. Educators encourage children to eat a nutritious, balanced diet by educators whilst in our care and children are never forced to eat.
- Ensure mealtimes are unhurried and children are not rushed to finish their meal. Children are provided additional food if they are still hungry and encouraged to eat at a pace that is comfortable for them.
- Encourage toddlers to be independent and develop social skills at mealtimes.
- Talk to families about their child's food intake and voice any concerns about their child's eating.
- Ensure they are familiar with and follow all policies and procedures as developed by Petit ELJ. This includes ensuring compliance with all related policies and procedures.
- Complete all training requirements – reading this policy and associated documents within their 3-month induction period and annually thereafter.
- Ensure that they ask for clarification if any information is unclear.
- Ensure all meals are recorded for each child on the Daily Feedback Sheet.

Families

It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to:

- Ensure the service is advised of their child's dietary requirements as well as any specific cultural, religious or health requirements at the time of enrolment or any medical condition impacted by food.
- Ensure that if they supply any foods for their child/ren that these are nutritious and they are in line with service requirements, that they do not contain allergens that could harm other children at the service.

7 Reporting and Compliance

Links to NQS and Legislation:

Education and Care Services National Law (2010)	
Section 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011	
77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
78	Food and beverages
79	Service providing food and beverages
80	Weekly menu
90	Medical conditions policy
91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures to be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

National Quality Standards		
Quality Area 2 Childrens Health and Safety		
2.1 Health		
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyles	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child

Links to related procedures and forms

- OP45-PR001 Expressed Breast Milk and Premade Formula Procedure
- OP45-F001 Daily Feedback Sheet
- OP45-F002 Expressed Breast Milk and Premade Formula Receipt Record
- OP45-F003 Chopping Board Colour Chart
- OP21-F001 Enrolment Form
- OP42-F001 Medical Condition or Health Risk Management Plan
- FS-FOR-008 Temperature Control Log (Food Safety Program Form)
- OP40 Managing Reporting Requirements and Notifications Policy
- OP42 Medical Conditions Policy

Links to references and further reading

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. ACEQCA- Policy and Procedure Guidelines. *Nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements Policy Guidelines.*
- Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.
- Guide to the National Quality Framework.
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010.
- National Quality Standard.

- Code of Ethics
- United Convention on the Rights of the Child
- *Food Regulation 2015*
- Food Safety Standards (Australia only). (2015):
<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/safetystandards/Pages/default.aspx>
- The Department of Health. Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood – Staff/Carers Book: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/get-up-grow-resource>
- Victoria State Government Education and Training Nutrition Australia Healthy eating in the National Quality Standard A guide for early childhood education and care services
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011.

8 Approval and review details

APPROVAL AND REVIEW	DETAILS
Approval Authority	COO
Administrator	Operations Managers
Next Review Date	12 months from date of acceptance