Nutrition, meals and dietary requirements

Introduction

Bega Valley Shire Council education and care services are committed to supporting the health and well-being of children and families. Meal times are an important part of each child’s day. They are not simply about receiving adequate nutrition, but also an extension of a child’s social and cultural context.

The following meals will be offered to children each day:

- Morning tea
- Lunch
- Afternoon tea

Water will be available to children at all times. Where children bring their own juice, good dentition practices require it to be diluted 50:50 with water.

Strategies

Develop a weekly menu that meets the dietary requirements of all children

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will ensure:

- The weekly menu is displayed and followed
- The weekly menu makes a range of nutritious foods available to children that support their growth, health and wellbeing.
- Any special cultural or dietary requirements are incorporated into the daily meals provided.

The Cook will:

- Develop the menu in consultation with families and children. The menu will balance a nutritious range of foods with children’s food needs, likes and dislikes.
- Display the menu in a central location for all families to read. Any daily changes to the menu will be recorded for families in an agreed location.
- Provide families with information that supports appropriate food choices for children who bring their own food.
Educational Leaders and Cooks will:

- Provide families with information that supports healthy eating for children who attend the education and care service.
- Provide advice and notices to all families about items that should be excluded from lunch boxes. This will apply to foods that may pose a health and safety risk to a child or to others with food intolerances or allergies e.g. fish, popcorn, nuts, eggs

Families who send a lunch box to the service will:

- Follow a healthy foods checklist for a day that includes
  - 3 child size serves of dairy or high calcium foods
  - 1 good size serve of iron
  - 2 child size serve of cereal based food
  - 1 child size serves of fruit
  - 2 child size serves of vegetables
- Send lunches in an insulated lunch container with an ice brick or frozen drink to maintain temperature
- Avoid sending lollies, fruit straps, chocolates, sweet biscuits, chips, fizzy drinks

**Professional development**

Cooks who are responsible for the daily provision of meals to children and others will:

- Complete an approved course on nutrition, meal planning and food safety. The cook will have access to ongoing professional learning and/or online resources.

Any person acting in the absence of the cook must:

- Follow the planned menu and have completed a food safety course.
- All Educators and others involved in food preparation or handling will:
  - Complete a food safety course or be trained by another person who has completed a course in food safety
  - Practice safe food handling and follow all displayed procedures for safe preparation, handling and storage of foods.
  - Make meal times are individually, socially and culturally appropriate

Educator, Staff and others will:

- Sit and eat together with children to model good eating practices and to encourage pleasant and respectful social conversations and experiences.
- Have access to information that identifies children’s special food needs including allergies, intolerances, cultural or religious practices or beliefs, likes and dislikes. This may be kept in the child’s individual record and displayed on the food trolley for quick reference where necessary.
- Respect individual eating preferences, food choices and food approaches. For example children may be offered small helpings, a special eating utensil or a limited range of foods on their plate at each serve.
• Provide children with the opportunity to identify their preferred seating in a social group and to sit with friends or family where possible

• Provide children with access to nutritious food if they are hungry. This may include:
  o Access to their lunch box
  o Progressive morning/afternoon tea
  o Additional serves of snacks or the main meal
  o An alternative food if they do not like the meal offered

• Support children to become independent eaters

Educators, Staff and others will provide children with opportunities to:
• Practice good hand-washing and food handling hygiene
• Choose foods from a well-balanced and nutritious range
• Make decisions about what to eat
• Make decisions about how much to eat
• Serve themselves
• Clean or scrape plates or utensils
• Drink water whenever thirsty
• Be involved in growing, preparing, cooking and eating a range of foods as part of their ongoing pleasure in good foods.
• Ensure families are involved in meal-times

Educators will provide families with opportunities to:
• Give information about their child’s likes and dislikes
• Share information about their child’s food practices, needs, allergies or intolerances
• Stay or visit for a meal with their child
• Join the group for a mealtime or special celebration
• Bring recipes in to share with the cook and others involved in the education and care service
• Give feedback on the menu, and suggestions for alternative meals

Food safety

All Educators, Staff, children and families will follow food safety strategies at meal times that include:
• Handwashing before eating
• Gloves when handling food
• Tongs and other utensils when serving food
• The use of individual food utensils
• Remaining seated at all times while eating
• Ensuring children are supervised at all times while eating or drinking from a bottle
• Ensuring there are NO HOT LIQUIDS consumed near children. Hot liquids may only be consumed in child free areas.

Food allergies
A food allergy is a reaction that a child may have to certain foods and may present in different ways. A child with an allergy to a food may show signs of eczema, hives, vomiting, facial swelling or breathing difficulties. The most common allergies involve egg, peanut butter, milk, fish or seafood, soy, wheat but may also involve many other foods. Allergies may occur when a child ingests foods, but may also occur if a child touches some foods.

Meals are suited to children who have allergies
The Authorised Provider and Nominated Supervisor will:
• Ensure enrolment forms are completed by families at commencement and each year to provide details on children’s food needs and preferences
• Ensure families complete a Medical Management and Action plan for any child with food allergies or intolerances
• Advise families of any child at risk of a medical emergency, and strategies that are in place to manage the risk.

Educational Leaders, Educators and the cook will:
• Ask families to provide detailed information about a child’s food allergies including her/his levels of sensitivity to the food, how to recognise symptoms of a reaction to a food and the level of response necessary if a child has an allergic reaction. This will be recorded in a Medical Management and Action Plan.
• Share all information about allergies and any updates to the information with all Educators and the Cook
• List each child’s allergies in the child’s play room and in the areas where food is prepared or consumed
• Sit with children at meal times and when food is being consumed to ensure that children do not swap or taste others’ meals
• Offer alternative foods to the child, particularly on special occasions to ensure s/he remains socially included
• Make considered decisions about how to ensure a child is not exposed to a food that may produce an allergic reaction. These decision will be made on an individual basis and may include asking a family to provide specialised dietary requirements (eg milk replacement product) or excluding the food for all children in the service (eg peanut butter)

Food costs
Educators, Staff and others will:
• contribute $2 per day towards the cost of any food that they eat if it is provided by the education and care service. This can be paid to the Administrative Officer or deducted from fortnightly payroll if a Pay Deduction Authorisation has been completed.
• Families may be asked to cover the cost of any special ongoing dietary requirements or to provide specialised foods from home eg: macrobiotic foods, soy or goats milk, non-dairy spreads.
Evaluation

Children, families and others have access to a range of healthy and nutritious foods and beverages that are individually, socially and culturally appropriate.

Legislative requirements

- Education and Care Services National Regulations, 2011.

References

- Bega Valley Shire Council, policy 5.02 Behaviour of Councillors and Staff and procedure 5.02.1 Code of Conduct Online: www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au
- Bega Valley Shire Council Children’s Services, Children’s routines policy, Operational Draft, June 2012
- Bega Valley Shire Council Children’s Services, Food safety and handling policy, Operational Draft, June 2012.
- Community Child Care Co-operative, Sample Policy, Nutrition/ Food/ Beverages/ Dietary Requirements