

## Contents

1. Summary .....	2
2. ELC Nutrition, Food and Beverages Policy .....	2
3. Dietary Requirements and Allergy-Aware ELCs and SACs .....	2
4. Nutritious and Safe Food Practices .....	3
5. Food Provided by Families – Nutritious and Safe Food Practices.....	3
6. Educational Programming.....	4
7. Definitions.....	4
8. Related Documents and Legislation .....	4
9. Contact.....	4

## 1. Summary

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- 1.1 This Policy outlines the requirements for Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (CECG) Early Learning Centers (ELCs) and School Age Care (SACs) to provide and encourage nutritious food choices and safe food handling, preparation, and storage. It applies to all workers in all CECG ELCs and SACs.
- 1.2 CECG ELCs and SACs prioritise children's health, safety and wellbeing. This includes safe practices for handling, preparing and storing food, as well as providing food and beverages that are nutritious and adequate in quantity, and chosen based on each child's dietary and medical requirements.
- 1.3 ELCs and SACs value our families and their cultures, customs and religious traditions. ELCs and SACs will work with families to ensure that the food and beverages provided to their children reflect their preferences.
- 1.4 ELCs and SACs incorporate children's agency and decision-making into our educational program. We plan meal times and other food-related experiences that enable this.

## 2. ELC Nutrition, Food and Beverages Policy

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- 2.1 ELCs and SACs must ensure:
  - food is handled, prepared and stored safely at the service (reg 77)
  - children have access to safe drinking water at all times (reg 78)
  - Nutritious food and beverages are offered on a regular basis throughout the day, appropriate to each child's needs and dietary requirements (reg 79), and
  - A weekly menu is displayed and accessible to family members, in ELCs and SACs that provide food (reg 80).

## 3. Dietary Requirements and Allergy-Aware ELCs and SACs

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- 3.1 Parents must inform ELCs and SACs of any dietary requirements or known allergies.
- 3.2 Where dietary requirements involve a health issue, ELCs and SACs will develop risk minimization plans for children in line with the [ELC and SAC Medical Conditions and Administration of Medication Policy](#).
- 3.3 ELCs and SACs will not provide food with nuts to children and will request all families not to bring food with nuts to the service (ground or tree nuts).
- 3.4 ELCs and SACs will notify all families of any known foods that cause anaphylaxis in children enrolled at the service and request them not to bring that food to the service. ELCs and SACs must also display a notice stating that a child who has been diagnosed as at risk of anaphylaxis is enrolled at the service (regulation 173(2)).

- 3.5 ELCs and SACs do not assume that food is free of nuts or other allergens, even where families have been requested not to bring those foods in. ELCs and SACs will promote other anaphylaxis strategies including:
- Reminding children not to share food they bring to the service
  - Monitoring food brought into the service for nuts and other foods known to cause anaphylaxis in children enrolled in the service
  - Ensure children wash hands before and after eating
  - Ensuring all children know which classmates have food allergies and know to tell an educator quickly if classmates with food allergies look or say they are sick, and
  - Class discussions on what allergies are and how people can support children with allergies.
- 3.6 ELCs and SACs that provide food will develop weekly menus with reference to known allergies and other dietary requirements.

#### 4. Nutritious and Safe Food Practices

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- 4.1 All Educators should complete safe food handling practices, for example [ACT Health food safety training](#).

##### **Food Provided by service**

- 4.2 ELCs and SACs that provide food to students will promote nutritious food choices and implement safe food handling, preparation, and storage procedures, including:
- [Registering as a food business](#) and complying with all requirements including [appointing a food safety supervisor](#) and notifying the Health Protection Service<sup>1</sup>.
  - Complying with relevant food safety regulations including the [Food Act 2001 \(ACT\)](#), [Food Regulation 2002 \(ACT\)](#), and [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#).
  - Provide nutritious foods including primarily foods from the green category of the [Traffic Light System](#). ELCs and SACs will not provide foods from the red category in weekly menus.
  - Completing daily and term [ELC and SAC Safe Food Handling Checklist](#).
  - Ensuring appropriate supervision and risk management for children during mealtimes and cooking experiences.

#### 5. Food Provided by Families – Nutritious and Safe Food Practices

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- 5.1 ELCs and SACs will promote nutritious choices and safe handling, preparation and storage of food where families provide their own food for children, including:
- Ensure children can easily identify the food they bring to the service.
  - Remind children not to share food they bring to the service.
  - Consider how food is stored between mealtimes and provide information to families about [lunchbox safety](#)<sup>2</sup> and including cold bricks or similar cooling with food.
  - Encourage families to provide foods from the green category in the [Traffic Light System](#) and avoiding foods from the red category.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to ACT Health [food business website](#) for further information

<sup>2</sup> <https://foodsafety.asn.au/lunchbox-safety/>

- Requesting all children bring a personal water bottle.
- 5.2 ELCs and SACs are not required to serve food provided by families, for example if it would endanger children with allergies.
- 5.3 ELCs and SACs must ensure all children are offered food appropriate to their needs on a regular basis throughout the day.

## 6. Educational Programming

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- 6.1 ELCs and SACs should consider how meal times and educational programming can be used to promote children's agency, reflect their independence and choice, and involve them in decision making about healthy food and beverage choices. For example:
- Discussing nutritional food choices during education and mealtimes.
  - Cooking experiences with children.
  - Exploring cultural aspects of food and mealtimes.
  - Reflect how educator to child, and child to child, relationships can be supported during meal times.
  - Using food to explore science, maths and literacy concepts.

## 7. Definitions

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- 7.1 None.

## 8. Related Documents and Legislation

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- 8.1 Related CECG Documents:
- [ELC and SAC Medical Conditions and Administration of Medication Policy](#)
- 8.2 Related legislation or Standards
- Nutrition Australia [Traffic Light System](#)

## 9. Contact

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- 9.1 For support or further questions relating to this policy, contact the CECG Early Learning Team.