

Healthy Eating Advisory Service

Developing a healthy eating policy

Early childhood

Developing a healthy eating policy

A healthy eating policy provides staff, carers, parents and families with clear and consistent information about your service's goals and practices around nutrition and healthy eating for children.

It will also assist your service to:

- Support children to meet their nutritional requirements, in line with the Australian Dietary Guidelines and Infant Feeding Guidelines.
- Meet the requirements of the National Regulations 168 and 170.
- Maintain consistent standards and procedures around food and nutrition.
- Ensure that the food and drinks provided are safe.
- Provide opportunities for learning and socialising at mealtimes.
- Guide the planning of your service's menu.
- Demonstrate leadership and commitment to healthy eating.
- Enhance and promote your reputation as a high quality service.
- Meet the healthy eating and oral health benchmarks of Healthy Places Healthy Futures.
- Ensure that any positive changes to food and eating practices are sustained in the long term.
- Assess and evaluate your performance against pre-determined goals and identify areas which may need improvement.

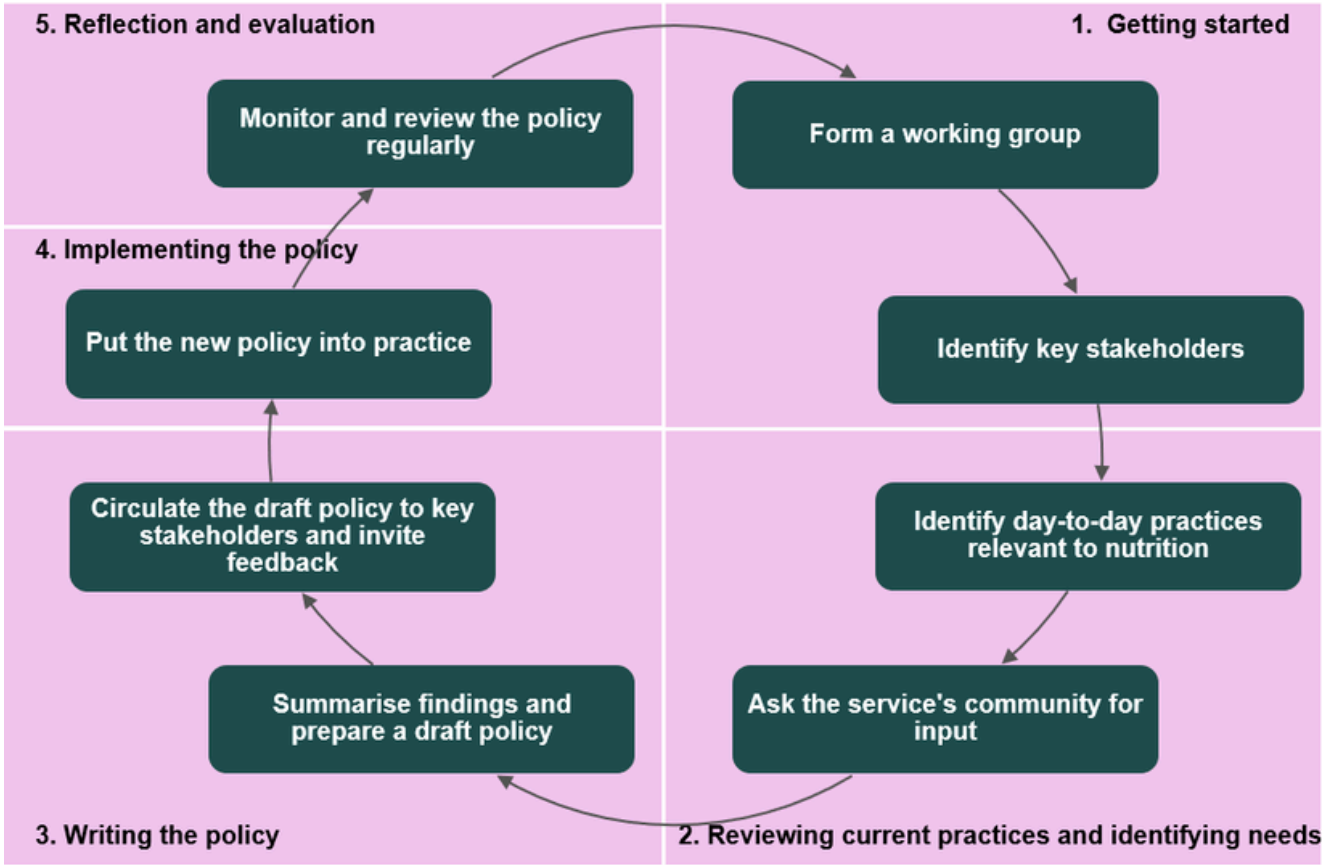


How do you develop a healthy eating policy?

Writing a healthy eating policy can be simple. Your service may already have a policy or a number of unwritten rules about food and eating that will form the basis of your policy.

Follow the next steps on the following pages to develop or review a policy that reflects your service's food and nutrition goals.

Refer to the figure below for stages in developing a healthy eating policy as you go.



Stage 1: Getting started

Form a working group

- This group will work together to develop a new policy, or review your existing one.
- The working group should include a coordinator and key stakeholders.
- The group should decide on goals and strategies for the policy as well as a timeline to work by.

Identify key stakeholders

A variety of key stakeholders should be invited to join the working group. These are likely to include:

- Parents
- Families
- The centre director or coordinator
- Cook
- Staff
- Carers
- Early childhood or healthcare professionals

Children are also important stakeholders, even if they cannot officially take part in a working group.



Stage 2: Reviewing current practices and identifying needs

Identify day-to-day practices relevant to food and nutrition

If your child care service currently has a healthy eating policy, check that it aligns with the requirements agreed on by the working group.

Ask the service's community for input

Inform all staff and families that a healthy eating policy is being developed and provide an opportunity for everyone to contribute.

Stage 3: Writing the policy

Summarise findings and prepare a draft policy

Use the Healthy eating and oral health policy checklist and other relevant resources to define what an ideal health promoting food and nutrition service looks like for early childhood services.



Resources to consider may include:

- Australian Dietary Guidelines
- Infant Feeding Guidelines
- National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care
- Food allergy and intolerance
- Menu planning guidelines for long day care
- Get Up and Grow: Healthy eating and physical activity for early childhood
- Healthy Places Healthy Futures resources

Circulate the draft policy to key stakeholders and invite feedback

Invite staff and families to comment on the draft policy before it is put into practice. Make any necessary changes according to the feedback received.



Stage 4: Implementing the policy

Put the new policy into practice

Inform all staff, parents and families about the new policy and display it clearly. Make any required changes and ensure your service follows the policy in everyday practice.

Identify any practices that are not consistent with the policy and any barriers. Find ways to overcome the barriers in order to put the policy into practice.

Training, professional development or dedicated work time may be required to assist staff members in implementing some of the changes.

Stage 5: Reflection and evaluation

Monitor and review the policy regularly

- Monitor changes made in your service as a result of the new policy.
- Check whether the policy is meeting short and long term goals.
- Gather feedback from families, staff and children on the policy.

A yearly review helps make sure the policy stays current and relevant, and that your early childhood service continues to follow it in practice.

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